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BJP promises CAA, UCC and more jobs in manifesto

The party's manifesto remains mum on NRC

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The BJP has made a host of new promises in its Lok Sabha poll manifesto including for farmers' empowerment like the launch of a Krishi Infrastructure Mission for coordinated implementation of agri-infrastructure projects.

In its 2024 manifesto, the BJP has repeated its promise on implementing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and reiterated its stand to draw a Uniform Civil Code but has skipped the contentious issue of National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Named "Modi ki Guarantee", the manifesto largely builds on the government's existing welfare schemes targeted at different sections of society, while reiterating the BJP's commitment to roll out one-nation-one-election, one of the two issues mentioned in its 2019 manifesto too. The government has taken some concrete steps for their implementation.

The BJP promised to include all senior citizens above the age of 70 years in the 'Ayushman Bharat' scheme, which provides health insurance of up to Rs 5 lakh.

It also spoke of considering bullet trains in north, south and east India and expanding "new age" trains like Vande Bharat, Amrit Bharat and Namo Bharat.

Promising to strengthen the sports ecosystem to make India a world leader in sports, the BJP manifesto - Sankalp Patra - said its government will facilitate the Indian Olympic Association to bid for hosting the Olympic Games in 2036.

The party also promised to continue efforts to remove the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) in a phased manner in the northeast states and leverage the region as a strategic gateway for the "Act East" policy.

It underscored the commitment to defending India's citizens and interests at "home and abroad from all threats of terrorism" as it cited surgical and air strikes during the first term of the Modi government to highlight its zero-tolerance.

Touching on its cultural agenda after having fulfilled its decades-old promise of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the BJP said its government will undertake "significant new projects" across the country to develop religious and tourist sites inspired by the Kashi Vishwanath corridor model.

The manifesto promises are categorised under 10 social groups, including the poor, middle class, women, youth, senior citizens, farmers, fishermen, labourers, traders and traditionally deprived sections like the SC and ST, and 14 issues, including secure India, prosperous India and ease of living in cities among others.

As has been its recent practice, the party has chosen to refer to the country as Bharat in the manifesto. The Sankalp Patra, released by Modi, party president J P Nadda and other senior leaders including Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, however offered several measures to fulfil dreams of owning a house.

—PTI

Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Narendra Modi, JP Nadda and Nirmala Sitharaman release the manifesto in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Modi ki guarantees

The 76 page manifesto refers to India as Bharat and made the following promises:-

- India to become the third largest economic power
- Implement Citizenship Amendment Act
- Implement Uniform Civil Code
- Implement One Nation, One Election
- Infra development along the China, Myanmar, and Pakistan borders
- Free ration to 80 crore citizens for the next five years
- Free electricity to poor households
- Promises to increase MSP on crops from time to time
- Infra like women's hostels and creches near industrial and commercial centres
- Implement the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's reservation bill)

Iran launches missiles, drones in attack on Israel

JERUSALEM, 14 APRIL

Booms and air raid sirens sounded across Israel early Sunday after Iran launched hundreds of drones, ballistic missiles and cruise missiles in an unprecedented revenge mission that pushed the Middle East closer to a regionwide war.

A military spokesman said the launches numbered more than 300 but 99% of them were intercepted.

Calling the outcome "a very significant strategic success," Rear Adm Daniel Hagari said Iran fired 170 drones, more than 30 cruise missiles and more than 120 ballistic missiles. Of those, several ballistic missiles reached Israeli territory, causing minor damage to an air base.

Rescuers said a 7-year-old girl in a Bedouin Arab town was seriously wounded in southern Israel, apparently in a missile strike, though they said police were still investigating the circumstances of her injuries.

US President Joe Biden said US forces helped Israel down "nearly all" the drones and missiles and pledged to convene allies to develop a unified response. The Iranian attack, less than two weeks after a suspected Israeli strike in Syria that killed two Iranian generals in an Iranian consular building, marked the first time Iran has launched a direct military assault on Israel, despite decades of enmity dating back to the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@ANDRO1711

India issue new advisories for its nationals

The Indian diplomatic missions in Israel and Iran on Sunday issued fresh advisories for its nationals after Tehran launched drone and missile attack on the Jewish state, advising them to stay calm, adhere to safety protocols along with activating additional helpline numbers. For any assistance, contact the Embassy at: +989128109115; +989128109109; +989932179567 *—PTI*

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PHOTO: X/@kfpaofficial

Film producer Soundarya Jagadish dies by suicide

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Kannada film producer and businessman Soundarya Jagadish died following an alleged suicide attempt, police and sources close to him said on Sunday. The producer allegedly attempted suicide this morning in his residence at Mahalakshmi Layout. The police were informed immediately, Jagdish's friend Shreyas said, rejecting "misleading reports" that the death was due to cardiac arrest. He said, "On getting to know, he was immediately rushed to the hospital this morning...he had attempted suicide by hanging." Jagadish, who also owned a pub in the City, was also a builder and businessman along with being a film producer. According to reports, the pub was recently involved in a controversy following late night partying by some film personalities and crew, resulting in a temporary cancellation of its licence. Jagadish has produced several films including 'Snehitaru', 'Appu Pappu', 'Mast Maja Maadi' and 'Ramleela'. *—PTI*

Indian prisoner Sarabjit's killer shot dead in Pakistan

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Amir Sarfaraz Tamba, an accused in the murder of Indian death row prisoner in Pakistan Sarabjit Singh and a close associate of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror outfit founder Hafiz Sayeed, was killed by unidentified gunmen in Lahore on Sunday, official sources said. Tamba was attacked by motorcycle-borne assailants in the Islampura area of Lahore in Pakistan and was rushed in critical condition to a hospital where he succumbed to his injuries, the sources said. Singh, 49, died of cardiac arrest in Jinnah Hospital Lahore in the wee hours of 2 May, 2013, after being comatose for nearly a week following a brutal assault by inmates including Tamba, inside the high-security Kot Lakhpat jail. Notorious as 'Lahore ka asli don', Tamba was part of the 'Truckenwalla gang' and was engaged in the property trade and drug trafficking. He was involved in a clash recently with one of the gang members Ameer Balaj Tipu who was later killed during a marriage reception in Lahore. Tamba's body bore four bullet wounds. *—PTI*

Cong 'Sultan of tukde, tukde gang': Modi

MYSURU/ HOSHANGABAD, 14 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called Congress "the sultan of tukde tukde gang", as he accused Opposition party of having the dangerous intention to "divide, break and weaken" the country.

Attacking the ruling Congress in Karnataka, he said: "Because of loot, the government's coffers are empty, developmental and welfare schemes are being shut," adding, "Hundreds of crores of black money is being sent across the country from Karnataka to help Congress fight election. This is the model of Congress' rule."

He was addressing a mega public meeting at Maharaja's College ground here aimed at drumming up support for BJP and JD(S) candidates from Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, Mandya and Hassan Lok Sabha constituencies.

JD(S) patriarch and former prime minister HD Deve Gowda was among those who shared the dais with Modi in a show of strength by NDA.

Modi claimed that Congress has crossed "all the limits of hating the country".

Modi also mocked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, terming him a "royal magician" over his remark to eradicate poverty "with a single stroke" and said the country doesn't take him seriously. *—PTI*

Narendra Modi with HD Deve Gowda during an election campaign rally ahead of Lok Sabha election, in Mysuru, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

HALT DEMOLITION OF KANNADIGAS' HOMES: CM TO GOA

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Expressing concern over the alleged demolition of houses belonging to Kannadigas in neighbouring Goa, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday appealed to his counterpart Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant to cease further demolitions immediately until alternatives are provided to people living there.

He also requested Sawant to ensure that all displaced individuals receive adequate rehabilitation. "Deeply concerned by the demolition of homes belonging to Kannadigas in Sangolda, Goa.

I appeal to the Chief Minister of Goa, Shri Dr Pramod Sawant, to cease further demolitions immediately until alternatives are provided, and ensure all displaced individuals receive adequate rehabilitation," Siddaramaiah posted on X.

He said, "It's crucial we uphold the dignity and stability of every affected family."

Siddaramaiah has shared the media reports and pictures of the alleged demolition in his post. *—PTI*

TRIBUTE TO BABASAHEB

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah pays homage to BR Ambedkar on his 133rd birth anniversary, in Bengaluru on Sunday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

INDIAN STUDENT SHOT DEAD IN CAR IN VANCOUVER

OTTAWA, 14APRIL

A 24-year-old Indian man who went to Canada in 2022 to pursue higher education was shot dead in his car in Vancouver city, police said on Sunday.

The Vancouver Police Department in a press release said officers were called to the scene around 11pm on 12 April after residents heard the sound of gunshots.

Chirag Antil was found deceased inside a vehicle in the area, police said. No arrests have been made and the investigation remains ongoing, it said.

The incident happened within a block of the route for Saturday's Vaisakhi parade and festival, police said.

The body was found in a vehicle in the area around 11pm Friday, according to police spokesperson Const. Tania Visintin, CBC News reported. Visintin did not say if the killing was connected to gang activity.

Chirag Antil's family has set up a fundraiser on GoFundMe with a goal of Canadian dollars 40,000 to repatriate his body to India. *—PTI*

HIGH MERCURY CONTENT

Fairness creams fuel surge in kidney issues

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The use of skin fairness creams is driving a surge in kidney problems in India, according to a new study.

Driven by society's obsession with fair skin, skin fairness creams have a lucrative market in India. However, the huge amount of mercury in these creams is known to harm the kidneys.

The study, published in the medical journal Kidney International, showed that the increased use of fairness creams with high mercury content is driving cases of Membranous Nephropathy (MN), a condition damaging kidney filters and causing protein leakage.

PHOTO: IANS

- MN is an autoimmune disease resulting in nephrotic syndrome- a kidney disorder that causes the body to excrete too much protein in the urine.

MN is an autoimmune disease resulting in nephrotic syndrome- a kidney disorder that causes the body to excrete too much protein in the urine.

The study examined 22 cases of MN reported between July 2021 and September 2023.

The patients were presented to Aster MIMS Hospital with symptoms that were often subtle with fatigue, mild edema, and increased frothing of urine. Only three patients had gross edema, but all had elevated protein levels in their urine.

One patient developed cerebral vein thrombosis, a blood clot in the brain, but renal function was preserved in all.

The findings showed that about 68 per cent or 15 out of the 22 were positive for neural epidermal growth factor-like 1 protein (NELL-1) -- a rare form of MN that is more likely to be associated with malignancy.

Of the 15 patients, 13 admitted using skin fairness creams before their symptom onset. Of the rest, one had a history of use of traditional indigenous medicines while the other had no identifiable trigger. *—IANS*

K'taka women's panel files complaint against HDK

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Nagalakshmi Chaudhary, Chairperson of State Women's Commission, has announced firm action against political leaders making derogatory statements about women in Karnataka. She declared that a case will be filed against former Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy for his controversial remarks regarding village women, and Sanjay Patila, BJP's representative, for his disparaging comments aimed at Secretary Lakshmi Hebbalkar.

Expressing grave concern over the degradation of women's dignity by politicians in influential positions, Chaudhary emphasised the seriousness of the issue from a social perspective. She affirmed that Women's Commission will take decisive measures to address such misconduct. Kumaraswamy's contentious statement, made during a campaign rally in Turuvekere town, sparked outrage as he insinuated that village mothers had strayed due to government guarantee schemes. Responding to the backlash, Kumaraswamy defended himself, asserting that his intention was to caution against the exploitation of women under the guise of guarantees, and accused Congress of distorting his words for political gain.

—Salar News

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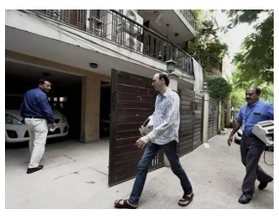


PHOTO: PTI

IT Dept raids residence of DKS' close associate

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Income Tax department conducted raids at the residences of Kemparaju, a close associate of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, and MP DK Suresh. The raids targeted Kemparaju's residence in Vajarahalli on Kanakapura Road on Sunday focusing on his business interests, including granite and crusher ventures. Earlier on Wednesday the State government terminated CBI probe into the disproportionate assets case involving Shivakumar. This decision follows the Lokayukta's issuance of a notice to Shivakumar, requesting documentation related to the case. The case, originally initiated by CBI on 3 October, 2020, has now been transferred to Bengaluru City Police Station under Reference 2.

—Salar News

Police open fire at murder accused in Kolar

KOLAR, 14 APRIL

Kolar Police opened fire in self defense against two murder accused here on Sunday. The accused sustained leg injuries and is hospitalised. Srinivasapur Circle Inspector Goravanakolla and two constables also sustained injuries in the incident. They are admitted to SNR Hospital Kolar. The accused are identified as Pramod and Anil both residents of Tekal Malur taluk.

The events began on Friday afternoon when two men, identified as Subramani and Gajendra engaged in a quarrel over the issue of fishing in the village tank . The argument escalated the next day with the village splitting into two factions. The Gram Panchayat members tried to compromise the issue but two youths were stabbed in the ensuing fight. A man identified as Lokesh succumbed to injuries while another was hospitalised. The police officials were attacked when they went to arrest the murder accused

—Salar News

School teacher held for sexually assaulting minor

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 14 APRIL

A teacher in Yalandur taluk was arrested for sexually assaulting a 17-year-old tribal boy in Chamarajanagar. The incident occurred on the night of 5 April. The teacher, who is gay, allegedly sexually assaulted the boy after making him drink and smoke. The boy reported the incident to his parents who then lodged a complaint with the DC, leading to the teacher's arrest. This incident, which should have resulted in an immediate FIR being filed, was delayed until pressure was brought to the attention of the DC and ADC. The boy received counseling, and efforts are being made to address the issue of abuse in the school. *—Salar News*

Dalits enter mutt to celebrate Ambedkar Jayanti

BALLARI, 14 APRIL

To mark the 133rd birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar, the Constitution Defence Struggle Committee hosted an event aimed at promoting harmony and brethren at Uttaradi Mutt in Ballari on Sunday. The event began with members of the Struggle Committee, including Coordinator A Karunanidhi and CPM leaders Maradi Jambaiah Nayak and Bhaskara Reddy, paying their respects at the Ambedkar statue at Ambedkar Circle. They then proceeded to Uttaradi Mutt on Railway Station Road to discuss the objectives of the programme. The initiative aims to emphasise that the change needed is not just in the constitution but in our societal mindset.

—Salar News

ED writes to Guv, Lokayukta over KOMUL hiring scam

In Jan, ED conducted searches against Congress MLA, aides

NEW DELHI/BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

The alleged recruitment scam pertains to September, 2023 when KOMUL announced hiring for 81 positions **PHOTO : PTI**

- According to ED, 320 candidates were chosen for interview in December, 2023 and a final list of 75 selected candidates was approved by the KOMUL board

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has written to the Karnataka Governor and the Lokayukta seeking registration of an FIR and independent probe into "systematic rigging" of a 2023 recruitment process in the Kolar-Chikkaballapur District Cooperative Milk Producers Union Limited (KOMUL) led by a Congress MLA under investigation in a money laundering case.

Official sources told PTI that the alleged 'cash-for-jobs' racket was unearthed by the federal agency during searches conducted by it in January against KY Nanjegowda, a Congress MLA from Malur seat in Kolar district, and his associates.

They were raided as part of a money laundering investigation into an alleged illegal allotment of government land worth Rs 150 crore to ineligible persons. The alleged recruitment scam pertains to September, 2023 when KOMUL announced hiring for 81 positions through a written test conducted by the Mangalore University.

The recruitment process, as per ED, comprised a written test (85 per cent weightage) followed by an interview (15 per cent weightage) by a recruitment committee that was headed by KOMUL Chairman Nanjegowda, a director of the KOMUL board KN Nagaraj, Additional registrar from the cooperative department Lingaraju, a representative of the Karnataka milk federation BP Raju and KOMUL MD Gopala Murthy.

According to ED, 320 candidates were chosen for interview in December, 2023 and a final list of 75 selected candidates was approved by the KOMUL board. These candidates were later sent for training "without" publishing the results.

The agency, as per official records, has shared "evidence" seized by it like "tampered" OMR sheets, loose sheets containing names of the candidates and money collected from them, "referrals" received from politicians for selection of their favoured candidates and digital data containing phone calls and WhatsApp chats that was seized during raids at the University and the directors of KOMUL.

The Governor is understood to have written to the state authorities for a probe into these findings and allegations made by ED. The investigation, ED claimed, has unearthed "systematic rigging" of the entire recruitment process at KOMUL and Nanjegowda has emerged as the "central figure" in this "illicit cash-for-jobs" case.

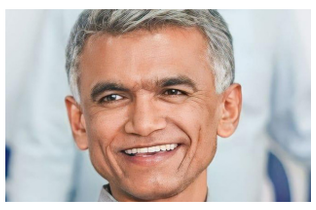
The agency, after the January searches against the Congress MLA, had issued an official statement claiming it unearthed a "scam" in a recruitment exercise of the KOMUL. "It was noticed that recruitment committee of KOMUL chaired by KY Nanjegowda and four other members completely manipulated the interview process," the agency had said. It claimed in its report that the VC of the Mangalore University "acknowledged" the "gross misconduct" done by the registrar (evaluation) in "manipulating" this KOMUL recruitment process as he (VC) wrote to state government authorities urging them to take cognisance of these irregularities. It claimed that the interview process was "manipulated".

—PTI

AHEAD OF MODI'S VISIT

Money allocated for Upper Bhadra not released: Min

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL



Krishna Byre Gowda **PHOTO : FB**

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Karnataka, State Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda alleged that out of Rs 5,300 crore that was promised to State under Upper Bhadra Project, not a single 'paisa' has been released by BJP-led NDA at Centre.

We want to ask the PM: Why did you announce Rs 5300 crore and not release a single pie to Karnataka?" Gowda asked. He claimed that although the central government collects a lot in taxes from Karnataka, in return, it gets the lowest share of all the states. He said that the Central government has done injustice to the drought-prone central region of Karnataka.

"In last year's budget, they announced Rs 5300 crore in central assistance to the Upper Bhadra Project, for providing drinking water to the drought-prone central regions of Karnataka covering several districts. After having announced Rs 5300 crore in their budget and the same being approved by the Parliament, it became an act of Parliament. Not a single 'paisa' was released to Karnataka. This is an injustice to the drought-prone central region of Karnataka." Modi is scheduled to take out a roadshow at Mangaluru down south in Karnataka on, Sunday.

The roadshow is scheduled to commence at 6pm on Sunday, with Modi kicking off the event by garlanding the bust of Narayana Guru at Narayana Guru Circle. Karnataka, which has 28 Lok Sabha seats, will vote in two phases on 26 April and 7 May.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Congress and JD(S) fought together against BJP. BJP had won 25 seats; Congress and JD(S) won just one seat each. The Lok Sabha Elections 2024 will be held in seven phases starting on 19 April. *—ANI*

ELECTION CAMPAIGNING

Bengaluru Central Congress candidate Mansoor Ali Khan campaigns at Sarvagnanagar in Bengaluru on Sunday. He also interacted with walkers in Cubbon Park **PHOTO: PTI**

HDK's 'rural women have lost their way' remark sparks row

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy's comment that women in rural areas have "lost their way" because of the five guarantee schemes introduced by Congress government in Karnataka, has elicited sharp reactions from the ruling party.

Some women Congress workers staged a protest with "Go back Kumaraswamy" slogans and placards in Mandya, where Kumaraswamy is contesting the Lok Sabha elections.

With Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar also attacking him over his comments, Kumaraswamy sought to clarify by stating he was only cautioning the womenfolk about their "innocence being misused" by Congress administration in the name of guarantee schemes and that he did not insult them.

Sharply reacting to Kumaraswamy's remark, Siddaramaiah in Madikeri on Sunday said it shows his mindset and his feelings for women.

Clarifying on his statement, Kumaraswamy said Congress doesn't have anything else to discuss about him other than this.

"What I said yesterday is, in the name of guarantees, attempts are being made to mislead you - the innocent women from villages. I told them -- without giving you strength, they (Congress) are trying to keep you in a position where you seek alms, and be aware of it, without losing your way...," he said.

—PTI

DKS: BJP must explain HDK's remark on women

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar demanded accountability from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders regarding a derogatory statement made by Kumaraswamy against women.

Speaking at the Kodagu rally Shivakumar said, "Kumaraswamy's statement insults the mothers and sisters of Karnataka. While I won't seek an apology from him, I demand an explanation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, and Smriti Irani."

He expressed support for their planned protest against Kumaraswamy, urging them to pursue their cause within legal boundaries. "Our government has introduced five guarantee schemes to empower women and foster self-reliance.

Kumaraswamy clarified his statement, stating, "I have said that you are being misled in the name of guarantee. Have I insulted women? I have said that women are being misled by using their innocent minds. I told you to be careful. They don't understand that I have said this and are making a controversy. Congress leaders are trying to blame me."

—Salar News

BSY meets disgruntled MP Srinivas Prasad to mend fences

MYSURU, 14 APRIL

Chamarajanagar Lok Sabha Constituency's BJP MP Srinivas Prasad has declared his exit from active politics.

The decision comes following the party's denial of a ticket to his son-in-law Harshawardhan for the Chamarajanagar Lok Sabha seat. Family members and supporters of Prasad have shifted allegiance to Congress. Former chief minister and veteran BJP leader BS Yediyurappa visited Prasad's home on Sunday address MP's grievances against the party. The move came after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah visited Prasad's residence a few days back.Yediyurappa stated, "Prasad has agreed to attend Prime Minister Narendra Modi's event in Mysuru. He holds a significant position as a senior MP, and Modi holds him in high regard. I've requested a brief meeting with Modi. Prasad has also kindly agreed." Harshawardhan said, "My father-in-law's health has been deteriorating; he sustained a leg injury recently and is unable to move around much. Despite receiving invitations from Mysuru President Mahadevaswamy and former MLA Niranjan, he cannot attend the event." Srinivas Prasad's son-in-law, clarified, "Certain individuals are attempting to politicise the situation, but Prasad has not committed to supporting any party or individual publicly."

—Salar News

BJP MLA booked for remarks on Hebbalkar

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

The State Women's Commission has filed a suo motu case against former BJP MLA Sanjay Patil for his controversial remarks against Minister of Women and Child Development of Karnataka Laxmi Hebbalkar.

Following a protest staged by Congress workers outside Patil's residence in Belagavi, the Women's Commission issued a notice to Patil on Sunday. Expressing her dismay, Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar said that there is a need for restraint in speech, highlighting the insult not only to herself but to all women. She urged women across the State to unite in defence against such derogatory remarks. Reacting to the statement by Patil, Hebbalkar said, "I am a daughter of the Lingayat community, and this is an insult to the entire Lingayat community. The dignity of a woman has been violated by saying 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' is not enough for BJP." *—Salar News*

B'luru South to host 2,120 polling booths

Bengaluru, 14 April

Preparations for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections are in full swing in the City with Bengaluru South constituency hosting a total of 2,120 polling booths for the elections.

Under the second phase, randomization of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) were completed on Sunday. Election Commission requested the assistance of volunteers from the National Cadet Corps and National Service Scheme.They will be deployed to assist voters at polling centres to oversee the arrangements. To streamline the voting process, QR codes indicating polling booth locations have been incorporated into voter tickets.

—Salar News

KNOW YOUR CANDIDATE

Cong's Gowtham and NDA's Babu eye Kolar win

INTERVIEW WITH CONGRESS' KV GOWTHAM

KV Gowtham **INTERVIEW** Deepthi R Kolar

Q: You have been labelled as a neutral candidate. How you are managing the two factions in the party?
A: Basically, I was not forced on the constituency, and I am a natural choice handpicked by the party's high command. As per the directions of the party, the leaders are working for my success.

Q: State Food Minister KH Muniyappa is yet to make his presence felt in the constituency, how do you read this?
A: He has represented the constituency seven times in a row and he knows the pulse of the voters. I am sure he will jump in to campaign any moment and will tighten loose ends for my success

Q: What are your priorities if you get elected?
A: I will strive to carry out all the developmental schemes of Congress government in the State, and ensure that the benefits of the programmes reach the poor and needy. The guarantee schemes have made a huge impact on the rural masses, and I am banking on the success of these schemes to get the voters' support.

Q: Will the division of Scheduled Caste over Right and Left sects hurt the outcome of the elections for Congress?
A: Not at all, the Scheduled Caste people have been supporting Congress unitedly in all the elections, and they will do so in the coming polls too.

Q: What are your main arms in the campaigning?
A: I am creating awareness among the voters about the ill effects of CAA and NRC. Dalits and minority voters are apprehensive about the same, and they would stand solidly behind. *—Salar News*

POLLS 2024 INDIA CHOOSES

Kolar Lok Sabha constituency is all set for a close battle between the NDA and Congress.

The constituency is spread out in two revenue districts of Kolar and Chikkaballapur, and the two main parties have fielded candidates with different visions for the people of Kolar.

While Congress candidate KV Gowtham is banking on the guarantee schemes of Congress, his rival M Mallesh Babu from JD(S) is trying to woo voters with his vision manifesto. In an exclusive interview with Salar News, both the candidates shared their thoughts on the elections and their priorities if elected.

INTERVIEW WITH JD(S)' MALLESH BABU

M Mallesh Babu **INTERVIEW** Deepthi R Kolar

Q: BJP has 'sacrificed' the seat it won in 2019 to JD(S) for the sake of the NDA alliance. Are you sure that you would be able to retain the seat?
A: I am sure of retaining the seat as the coordination between NDA partners is good, and the leaders of both parties are working in tandem with each other.

Q: How are you planning to encash the divide between Right and Left sects in Scheduled caste?
A: As an educated person, I don not believe in dividing the people on caste lines, and I am quite confident that all Scheduled Caste people will vote for me for the upcoming elections irrespective of differences among the leaders.

Q: What are your plans for the constituency if you get elected?
A: First and foremost, I would like to bring Krishna Water (which is flowing at a distance of about 25 km from our district) to Kolar district. Secondly, I would prevail on both the Central and State governments to set up a huge industrial hub on over 12,500 acres of vacant lands lying near KGF, and finally, a new hi-tech ultra-modern APMC yard would be set up in Kolar to facilitate farmers who grow vegetables in abundance.

Q:What are your weapons in the campaign?
A: I am trying to create awareness among the voters over the progress India has made in the last 10 years under the Modi government, especially on the economic front, manufacturing field, and growth of the country's GDP.

—Salar News

Shah to campaign in Manipur on Monday

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will campaign in ethnic strife-torn Manipur on Monday, besides visiting Tripura and Rajasthan to garner support for BJP candidates in the Lok Sabha polls. Shah will address a rally in Imphal seeking votes for Thounaojam Basanta Kumar Singh, the education minister of north-eastern state who is also BJP candidate from the Inner Manipur constituency in the upcoming election. The seat is currently held by BJP leader and Minister of State for External Affairs Rajkumar Ranjan Singh. The Inner Manipur Lok Sabha segment has 32 Assembly constituencies across the conflict-scarred Imphal valley. The Lok Sabha polls are scheduled to be held in seven phases starting 19 April and the counting of votes will be taken up on 4 June. *—PTI*

SP releases fresh list of 7 candidates

LUCKNOW, 14 APRIL

Samajwadi Party on Sunday declared seven more Lok Sabha poll candidates for Uttar Pradesh, with the party fielding former MP Bhishm Shankar 'Kushal' Tiwari from Domariyaganj seat. With this, the Akhilesh Yadav-led party has announced the names of 57 candidates in the state, party leaders said. According to the list released by the SP on X, sitting MP from Shravasti and former BSP leader Ram Shiromani Verma has been fielded by the party from the seat. Besides, former MLA Laxminath alias Pappu Nishad has been named as party candidate from Sant Kabir Nagar Lok Sabha seat. SP has also given the ticket to Babu Singh Kushwaha, a former close aide of BSP chief Mayawati. He has been made the SP candidate from Jaunpur, party spokesperson Rajpal Kashyap said. Ramashankar Rajbhar, a former BSP MP from Salempur, has been made the candidate by the SP in this election. He had represented Salempur in the Lok Sabha from 2009 to 2014.

—PTI

VHP leader shot dead; Punjab BJP chief slams AAP

RUPNAGAR, 14 APRIL

A local Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader was shot dead by two unidentified bike-borne men at his shop in Nangal town here, police said on Sunday. The deceased, Vikas Bagga, was the president of the Nangal unit of the VHP, they said. The incident took place on Saturday evening when the two assailants entered Bagga's shop located near the Rupnagar railway station and opened fire at him before fleeing immediately, the police said. Anandpur SahibDeputySuperintendent of Police Ajay Singh said the police were examining the CCTV footage of nearby areas to find the accused. Meanwhile, VHP supporters and BJP workers on Sunday held a protest on the Una-Chandigarh highway to protest the murder of Bagga. They demanded the arrest of the murderers. Punjab BJP chief Sunil Jakhar slammed the AAP-led Punjab government over the law and order situation

—PTI

IT raids Abhishek's chopper; TMC calls it 'deliberate ploy'

KOLKATA, 14 APRIL

Trinamool Congress on Sunday said its General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee's helicopter was raided by Income Tax officials in Kolkata's Behala flying club and alleged this was part of a deliberate ploy by the BJP to harass and intimidate opposition candidates whom they cannot engage with politically. In a post on X, the party said the chopper was undergoing a trial run at Behala Flying Club for Banerjee's visit to Haldia in Purba Medinipur when a team of IT officials arrived and searched it. according to Banerjee, "the BJP is trembling when it comes to Bengal," TMC said. *—PTI*

Oppn lost power due to disunity: Amartya Sen

Sen says Congress has many organisational problems

KOLKATA, 14 APRIL

Noting that Opposition in India has lost much of its power due to disunity, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen said Congress has many organisational problems that need remedying.

Sen said that a caste census might be an exercise to consider, but India needs greater empowerment for the underprivileged through better education, healthcare, and gender equity.

The noted economist said he is "enormously proud" to be a citizen of a democratic country like India, but there is a need to "work harder to enhance the nation's democratic nature".

Sen said the Opposition bloc INDIA failed to gain much traction, with its important allies such as JD(U) and RLD walking out.

When asked what the Opposition lacks in taking on the BJP, he said, "The Opposition in India lost a lot of its power due to its disunity. Unity would have given it much more strength."

Nobel laureate Amartya Sen
PHOTO: PTI

- Noting that Opposition in India has lost much of its power due to disunity, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen said Congress has many organisational problems that need remedying

Sen was also critical of the BJP-led NDA government over its economic policies.

He claimed that widespread illiteracy and extraordinary gender inequality make it difficult for the poor in India to progress.

"India's ruling classes tend to look after the interests of the rich. Widespread illiteracy, commonly shared ill health, and extraordinary gender inequality make it difficult for the Indian poor to progress," he said.

Moody's Analytics on Friday projected India's economy to expand by 6.1 per cent in 2024, lower than the 7.7 per cent growth witnessed in 2023.

When asked about the Opposition's claim that the BJP might change the Constitution if it returns to power, Sen said changing the country's Constitution would not serve any purpose except aligning it with the government's "single-religion focus".

Speaking on the Opposition making the caste census an important poll issue, Sen said India needs more empowerment for its underprivileged.

"A caste census may be a good exercise to consider, but what India needs most is greater empowerment for the underprivileged through better education, healthcare, and gender equity," he said.

On whether BJP would be able to weather alleged dissatisfaction about economic performance by consolidating the majority Hindus with the construction of Ayodhya Ram Mandir and implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the 90-year-old professor said such an idea would betray the country's secular roots and multicultural nature.On the Lok Sabha polls, Sen said he is "enormously proud" to be a citizen of a democratic country like India. *—ANI*

POLICE SAYS

'Stone pelting attack on Jagan investigated as murder attempt'

AMARAVATI, 14 APRIL

Vijayawada city police in Andhra Pradesh have rounded up four to five suspects in the stone pelting case against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and will be investigating the offence from the angle of an 'attempt to murder' case, said an official on Sunday.

Unidentified miscreants hurled a stone at the Chief Minister on Saturday night near Vivekananda School Centre in Vijayawada's Singh Nagar, which injured his left temple when he was canvassing for polls.

The stone was hurled at a high speed, leading to a small cut.

Vijayawada police commissioner Kanthi Ratan Tata said a case has been booked under IPC Section 307 (attempt to murder).

"We have identified some suspects. We are interrogating them and that process is going on now. Four to five suspects. Case has been registered under IPC Section 307," Tata told PTI.

Further, he highlighted that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been formed with six officers and four policemen, who are scrutinising video footage and technical data to identify the stone pelters.

YS Jagan Mohan Reddy
PHOTO: PTI

- The stone was hurled at a high speed, leading to a small cut.Vijayawada police commissioner Kanthi Ratan Tata said a case has been booked under IPC Section 307 (attempt to murder)

According to Tata, a stone which could fit in a palm was hurled at the CM, which first hit him and then struck former minister and YSRCP leader V Srinivas, who stood beside him.

The police commissioner said all the suspects are locals and exuded confidence that the real culprits could be identified in a couple of days.

On Sunday, the YSRCP and TDP leaders engaged in a war of words over this incident.

YSRCP General Secretary S Ramakrishna Reddy claimed that the attack was a premeditated cold-blooded one on the Chief Minister.

"Who would have planned such an attempt? It stems from the insecurity that the TDP is experiencing as they are witnessing the response our leader is getting through the poll campaign, through the roadshows and 'siddham sabhas' (meetings)," he said, addressing a press conference.

Ramakrishna Reddy alleged that TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu had recently instigated a crowd in his 'prajagalam' (canvassing) meetings to attack Jagan and claimed that Naidu and his party would benefit if the YSRCP chief could not mingle with the masses.

"This leads us to presume that the TDP and their leader (Naidu) are responsible for the attack," he said, adding that the injury is a fact and its location sensitive.

EMPTY JUGGLERY OF WORDS: CONG ON BJP MANIFESTO

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Congress on Sunday trashed BJP Lok Sabha poll manifesto as a "jumla patra' full of rhetoric, with party chief Mallikarjun Kharge saying that Modi's guarantee is a "warranty of jumlas" as he has failed to fulfil the promises made in the past.

Congress also accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of not fulfilling promises made on the issue of jobs, doubling of farmers' incomes and tackling price rise and inflation, and alleged that he was now shifting the goalposts by talking about 2047 instead.

Kharge charged that the prime minister did not do any major work during his tenure which would have benefited the people, youth and farmers of the country. Modi released the BJP's Lok Sabha poll manifesto at the party headquarters here on Sunday. The manifesto has a special focus on the poor, youngsters, farmers and womenKharge said the youth are protesting for jobs and prices of food items have skyrocketed due to inflation and people are troubled by it, but the manifesto has nothing to say on it. Modi has only increased unemployment and inflation in the last 10 years, he charged. *—PTI*

WILL NOT CONTEST ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS TILL J-K IS UT: OMAR ABDULLAH

SRINAGAR, 14 APRIL

National Conference leader Omar Abdullah has ruled out contesting the assembly elections till Jammu and Kashmir remains a Union territory.

"I don't fancy my chances for anything. I don't aspire to the office of the Chief Minister. And I most certainly do not aspire to lead a Union Territory."I made it abundantly clear that in the current situation that J-K finds itself in, I am not contesting assembly elections. I have said this all the way back from 2020 onwards and my position has not changed,"he said. *—PTI*

MANDI: 'QUEEN' KANGANA TO FACEOFF CONG'S VIKRAMADITYA

SHIMLA, 14 APRIL

The stage is set for a battle royale in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi Lok Sabha seat as the Congress has pitted state minister Vikramaditya Singh, the titular king of the erstwhile princely state of Bushahr, against BJP candidate and actor Kangana Ranaut.

Singh is the son of six-time Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh and Pratibha Singh, the sitting MP from Mandi and the Congress' state unit president.Singh, the two-time MLA from the Shimla (rural) assembly segment, is not new in the parliamentary constituency as his father and mother each won the seat thrice. *—PTI*

IN PUNJAB AND DELHI

CONG RELEASES NEW LIST OF 10

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The Congress on Sunday issued another list of 10 candidates for the Lok Sabha election in Delhi and Punjab, tapping former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi for the Jalandhar-SC Lok Sabha seat.

According to the list, the party has fielded veteran politician J P Agarwal from the Chandni Chowk seat and youth leader Kanhaiya Kumar from the North East Delhi seat.

Kumar will be pitted against BJP's Manoj Tiwari, the sole BJP candidate not replaced in the national capital.

For the North West Delhi Lok Sabha seat, the party announced the name of former MP Udit Raj.

In Punjab, the party renominated its sitting MPs Gurjeet Singh Aujla from Amritsar and Amar Singh from Fatehgarh Sahib (SC) Lok Sabha seat.

Former MP Dharvir Gandhi will be contesting from the Patiala Lok Sabha seat. His candidature comes mere days after he joined the Congress leaving the Aam Aadmi Party.

The party has nominated its All India Kisan wing chief Sukhpal Singh Khaira from the Sangrur Lok Sabha seat and Jeet Mohinder Singh Sidhu from the Bathinda Lok Sabha constituency, which is currently represented by SAD chief's wife Harsimrat Kaur Badal.The Congress announced the name of Ujjwal Revti Raman Singh from Uttar Pradesh's Allahabad Lok Sabha seat. The opposition party also announced a list of 75 candidates for the Odisha assembly elections. *—PTI*

FOR LOK SABHA POLLS

Demand for choppers jumps up to 40 pc

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

With politicians and political party representatives criss-crossing the country for the Lok Sabha polls, the demand for chartered planes and helicopters has jumped up to 40 per cent, and the operators are expected to net 15-20 per cent more earnings, according to industry experts.

The hourly rates for chartered services have also spiked. The charge is about Rs 4.5 -5.25 lakh for an aircraft and around Rs 1.5- 1.7 lakh for a twin engine helicopter, they said.

While the demand has surged compared to the normal times and previous election years, there is lesser number of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters available. Some of the operators are looking to take planes and helicopters on wet lease.

The demand for chartered planes and helicopters has jumped up to 40 per cent
PHOTO: PTI

Generally, political parties use helicopters for their candidates and leaders to reach places in a shorter time, especially remote areas.

Gelli said the use of helicopters is being seen more in bigger states like Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

Business Aircraft Operators Association (BAOA) Managing Director Captain R K Bali told PTI that the demand for chartered planes is 30-40 per cent higher compared to the previous general polls.The bookings for chartered planes are done in advance and operators will be looking for maximum utilisation of aircraft. *—PTI*

10 BIGGIES

TO WATCH OUT THIS POLL SEASON

NARENDRA MODI
CRUISING TO A 3RD TERM?

Modi is seeking a third straight term and if he wins he will equal first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru's record. He is likely to build his narrative around "Modi ki guarantee" and the march towards "Viksit Bharat (developed India)"

Age: 73 | Party: BJP
Constituency: Varanasi

AMIT SHAH
BJP's CHANKAYA

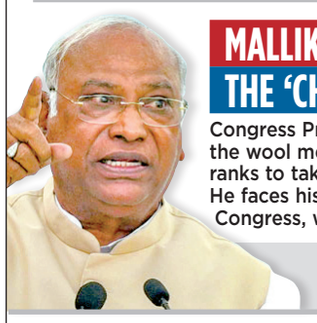
Described as the 'Chanakya' of BJP, Shah is the brain behind BJP's political narrative this poll season. Be it abrogation of Article 370 or the CAA law, he has veered the government in many tricky situations as Home Minister

Age: 59 | Party: BJP
Constituency: Gandhinagar

RAHUL GANDHI
'IDEOLOGICAL COMPASS' OF CONGRESS

Dubbed as the "ideological compass" of Congress, Rahuls' Bharat Jodo Yatra from Kanyakumari to Kashmir gave him a much-needed image makeover. But electoral defeats in state polls have put a question mark on just how effective it was

Age: 53 | Party: Congress
Constituency: Wayanad



MALLIKARJUN KHARGE
THE 'CHIEF'

Congress President, Kharge is the dyed in the wool member who rose through the ranks to take on the reins of the Congress. He faces his sternest test as he steers Congress, which takes on a formidable BJP

Age: 81 | Party: Congress
Position: Cong's President

MAMATA BANERJEE
THE IRON LADY OF TMC

After disagreements over seat-sharing with INDIA bloc, Didi had decided to go solo. Banerjee has been taking on BJP strongly and engaging in a duel with the saffron party, which has stepped up its attack aginst her over Sandeshkhali incident.

Age: 69 | Party: TMC
Position: WB CM & TMC Chief

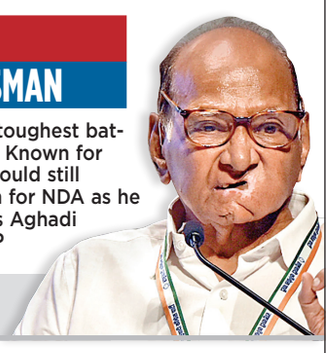
NITISH KUMAR
THE 'PALTU' KUMAR

Nitish's decision to switch to NDA, proved to be a major jolt for INDIA bloc. It has altered the dynamics in Bihar and now the verdict is all on the people.

Age: 73 | Party: JD(U)
Position: Bihar CM

SHARAD PAWAR
THE VETERAN STATESMAN

Pawar is probably fighting his toughest battle at the fag end of his career. Known for his never-say-die attitude, he could still prove to be a thorn in the flesh for NDA as he could galvanise the Maha Vikas Aghadi to pose a stiff challenge to BJP



Age: 83 | Party: NCP
Constituency: Baramati

MK STALIN
THE FORMIDABLE LEADER

Stalin has established his dominance in Tamil Nadu and provided stiff resistance to BJP's forays in the state. Taking along the Left and Congress, Stalin is expected to provide the much-needed electoral boost to the INDIA bloc.

Age: 71 | Party: DMK
Position: Tamil Nadu CM

TEJASHWI YADAV
THE TRUE HEIR?

Yadav, whose stature has gone up within the INDIA bloc has led the Opposition in Bihar with gusto. He is seen by many as the able heir to his father Lalu Prasad's legacy in Bihar

Age: 34 | Party: RJD
Constituency: Raghopur

ASADUDDIN OWAISI
BJP'S 'B-TEAM'?

Owaisi has often played the 'spoiler' for Opposition bloc in state polls and is dubbed by some leaders as BJP's B-team.

Age: 54 | Party: AIMIM
Constituency: Hyderabad

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Woman paraded semi-naked over affair in R'than

JAIPUR, 14 APRIL

A woman was allegedly paraded half-naked in Rajasthan's Barmer district for having an affair with a married man, police said on Sunday. A purported video of the incident that took place in Sarwadi village has surfaced on social media platforms. According to police, the wife and family members of the man had found out about his affair with the woman.In the video, a woman can be seen dragging the victim, who is half naked, by the hair while she pleads. Superintendent of Police, Barmer, Kundan Kawaria, said following the registration of a case at the Samdari police station, two women were detained while the victim was undergoing counselling.—*PTI*

3 of family killed in Kerala road accident

WAYANAD, 14 APRIL

Three members of a family died when the car they were travelling in collided head-on with an inter-state transport bus at Vythiri in this hilly district on Sunday. Three other family members sustained injuries in the accident which occurred at around 6.30am today, police said. The family, from Kondotty in Malappuram, was heading back home from Mysuru. The reason for the accident is yet to be ascertained, they said.—*PTI*

3 kids charred to death after house catches fire

AMBIKAPUR, 14 APRIL

Three minor siblings were charred to death after a fire broke out in a thatched house in Chhattisgarh's Surguja district, police said on Sunday. The incident took place late Saturday late in Barima village under Kamleshwarpur police station limits when the children's mother went to a neighbour's house after lighting a mud stove, a police official said. The woman, Sudhni Bai, lit the stove at around 9pm and went to the neighbour's house to look for her another elder daughter, he said. She returned at around 3 am and found the entire house gutted, the official said in a statement. After being alerted, a police team reached the spot. Prima facie, the stove flames seem to have led to the fire in the house, the police said, adding that further investigation is underway. The deceased have been identified as Kumari Gulabi ,8, her sister Sushma,4, and brother Ram Prasad,2, the official said.—*ANI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

4 die as car falls into river in Uttarakhand

BAGESHWAR , 14 APRIL

At least four people lost their lives after a car plunged into the river in Bageshwar, Uttarakhand, on Sunday morning, said police.On information, police and fire brigade team reached the spot and retrieved the bodies and sent them for post-mortem. According to the police, the accident happened on the Balighat-Dharamghar motor road when the driver lost control over the car.The car with Delhi number fell directly into 300-meter depth. As locals witnessed the incident they immediately informed the police and subsequently, police arrived and retrieved the bodies.A day ahead of this in a similar kind of accident, six people died and four others were injured when a car skidded off and fell down a gorge in the Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, the police said.

—*ANI*

Artists perform Assamese Bihu dance during a function in Guwahati; Devotees dressed in traditional attires click selfies at the Asthika Samaj Temple to mark the Malayali New Year 'Vishu', in Mumbai; Devotees stand in a queue to offer prayers at Dakshineswar Kali Temple on the occasion of Bengali New Year, in Kolkata; Devotees perform rituals at the bank of River Ganga on the occasion of Chaiti Chhath festival, in Patna on Sunday ***PHOTOS: PTI/ANI***

Concerned at hostilities between Israel, Iran: India

New Delhi is in touch with Indians in region, says MEA

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Hours after Iran launched dozens of drones and missiles at Israel in a retaliatory attack, India on Sunday said it is concerned over escalating hostilities between the two sides that threaten regional peace and security.

Iran carried out the attack on Israel in response to a suspected Israeli strike on its consulate in Damascus on 1 April in which seven Iranian Revolutionary Guards personnel, including two generals, were killed.

In its reaction, India called for immediate de-escalation of the situation and return to the path of diplomacy.

New Delhi said its embassies in the region are in close touch with the Indian community in the region.

"We are seriously concerned at the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran which threatens the peace and security in the region," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said."We call for immediate de-escalation, exercise of restraint, stepping back from violence and return to the path of diplomacy," it said.

MEA said India is monitoring the situation in West Asia.

—*ANI*

Israeli Iron Dome air defense system launches to intercept missiles fired from Iran, in central Israel, on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

- Hours after Iran launched dozens of drones and missiles at Israel in a retaliatory attack, India said it is concerned over escalating hostilities between the two sides that threaten regional peace and security. Iran carried out the attack on Israel in response to a suspected strike on its consulate in Damascus

India to suspend flights to Israel, Iran

New Delhi, 14 April

Indian airline companies are likely to announce the suspension of flight operations to and from Tel Aviv, Israel, amid rising tensions between Iran and Israel. According to the sources, "Flight operations to and from Israel are likely to be suspended, an official announcement will follow." Air India on Sunday decided to temporarily suspend flights to Tel Aviv amid escalating tensions between Israel and Iran. Air India operates four weekly flights between the national capital and Israeli city. Vistara too has announced the avoidance of Iranian airspace and is taking longer flight paths for their Europe and US operations to ensure the safety of passengers and crew. Indian airlines are altering flight paths for Europe and the Middle East due to escalating tensions between Iran and Israel.

—*ANI*

ANXIOUS FOR RETURN

Keralites await son's return aboard ship seized by Iran

KOZHIKODE, 14 APRIL

An elderly couple in this northern Kerala district is facing anxious moments thinking about the safety of their son onboard a seized Israel linked cargo ship in the gulf region and praying for his return.

Shyamnath, their son, was among the 17 Indians onboard an Israeli-linked cargo ship seized by the Iranian military near the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday.

The ship 'MSC Aries' was seized recently. Shyamnath's parents Vishwanathan and Shyamala, who are yet to come to terms with the news, said here that they talked to him on Saturday also.

Later in the day, they received a call from the shipping company's Mumbai office informing them about the shocking development.

"We are going through tough times...we have great concerns about the safety of our son. The company authorities said they could not contact the ship crew after the seizure," Vishwanathan told media.

Hailing from Velliparamba in this northern district, Shyamnath has been working as a second engineer in 'MSC Aries' for the last 10 years.

He last visited the hometown in September last year, parents said.

Viswanathan said besides Shyamnath, two men from neighbouring Palakkad and Wayanad districts were also among the crew members. Besides Indians, nationals from the Philippines, Pakistan and Russia were among the crew as per their knowledge, he said.

Official sources on Friday said India has called on Iranian authorities through diplomatic channels, both in Tehran and Delhi, to ensure the welfare and early release of the 17 Indian crew members of the cargo ship 'MSC Aries'.

The MSC (Mediterranean Shipping Company) said it is working closely with relevant authorities for the well-being of 25 crew members and return of the vessel. —*PTI*

- They received a call from the shipping company's Mumbai office informing them about the shocking development

AHEAD OF POLLS

Manipur: 'Drop arms' boxes put up as looted guns cause concern

IMPHAL/CHURACHANDPUR, 14 APRIL

"Please drop your snatched weapons here" reads the poster on a drop box placed on a road from Imphal and Churachandpur in Manipur.

In violence-hit Manipur, the general buzz associated with elections and the related paraphernalia of posters, banners and rallies are missing but it is the presence of these brown boxes with pictures of guns that is symbolic of the strife-ridden society struggling to return to normalcy.

The drop boxes are put at various places with messages asking people to return the weapons snatched from security forces by mobs during the unrest.

According to sources, over 4,200 weapons looted from the armouries in the violence-hit state continue to be untraceable.Calls to surrender the weapons and putting up drop boxes at several locations across the state, besides security forces launching various combing operations to recover the arms, are among the efforts made during the past 11 months after ethnic clashes rocked the northeastern state.

With only 1,800 weapons of the around 6,000 looted weapons surrendered by the warring communities, officials and experts say this is a matter of concern especially ahead of the elections as they also warn of a resurgence of banned terror groups in the state."Over 6000 weapons were snatched from the armouries including .303 rifles, Medium Machine Guns (MMG) and AK assault rifles, carbines, Insas Light Machine Guns (LMG), Insas rifles, M-16 and MP5 rifles... out of these over 1800 have been recovered so far," a source said. —*ANI*

Weapon drop boxes in violence hit Manipur seeking return of stolen weap-

Army conducts trials of anti-tank guided missile

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The Indian Army has successfully carried out field trials of indigenously-developed man-portable anti-tank guided missile (MPATGM) weapon system, paving way for its induction into the force's armoury.

The weapon system has been designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), officials said.

The overall system consisted of the MPATGM, launchers, target acquisition device and a fire control unit.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has complimented the DRDO and the Indian Army for the successful trials of the system, terming it as an important step towards achieving self-reliance in advanced technology-based defence system development.

The MPATG weapon system has been field evaluated in different flight configurations several times with an objective of proving the technology with high superiority, the defence ministry said.

"The warhead flight trials were successfully conducted at the Pokhran Field Firing Range on 13 April. Missile performance and warhead performance were found to be remarkable," it said on Sunday.

It said an adequate number of missile firing trials have been successfully conducted towards achieving compliance of complete operational envelope as stipulated in the General Staff Qualitative Requirements. —*PTI*

MP BOY WHO FELL INTO BOREWELL DIES

REWA, 14 APRIL

A six-year-old boy, who fell into an open borewell in Madhya Pradesh's Rewa district two days ago, has died despite hectic efforts by multiple agencies to save him, an official said on Sunday.

The child fell into the borewell in Manika village, located close to the Uttar Pradesh border, at around 3 pm on Friday when was playing near it. He was stuck at a depth of around 40 feet, officials earlier said.

Teams of the State Disaster Emergency Response Force (SDERF), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and local administration were engaged in the operation to bring the boy out of the borewell.The rescue teams supplied oxygen into the 70-feet-deep borewell and parallel pits were dug to reach him.

Collector Pratibha Pal said the child was located on Sunday after 40 hours of rescue operation but he was "unresponsive". —*PTI*

Guj transfers, promotes 35 IPS officers amid polls

AHMEDABAD, 14 APRIL

The Gujarat government on Sunday promoted and transferred 35 Indian Police Service officers amid the code of conduct in force for the Lok Sabha polls.

Important cities like Surat and Vadodara got new police commissioners due to the exercise.

Vadodara police commissioner Anupam Singh Gehlot was made Surat police commissioner, while additional director general of police (administration), Gandhinagar, Narashima Komar replaced him.

IPS officers Manoj Agarwal, KLN Rao, GS Malik and Hasmukh Patel were promoted from ADG to Director General of Police rank though they will continue to hold current posts, as per the government order.

A total of 20 IPS officers have been promoted by the Gujarat government.

Chirag Koradia, who was awaiting posting has been appointed as Inspector General (IG) of Police Border Range, while JR Mothaliya, who too was awaiting posting, will be new IG (Ahmedabad range). IPS officer Prem Vir Singh has been made IG (Surat Range).

Tarun Duggal, deputy commissioner of Police (Zone 7) of Ahmedabad city, has been appointed as Superintendent of Police of Mehsana, while Om Prakash Jat, currently Anti Terrorist Squad SP, will be new Ahmedabad Rural SP.

—*PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

- A total of 20 IPS officers have been promoted by the Gujarat government.

AMARNATH YATRA TO BEGIN FROM 29 JUNE

JAMMU, 14 APRIL

The annual pilgrimage to the 3,880-metre-high Amarnath shrine in south Kashmir Himalayas will commence from 29 June and conclude on 19 August , Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) announced on Sunday.

Advance registration for the 52-day-long yatra will be opened on 15 April, the board said.

The annual yatra takes place from the twin tracks -- the traditional 48-km Nunwan-Pahalgam route in Anantnag district and the 14-km shorter but steep Baltal route in Ganderbal district. —*PTI*

- The annual pilgrimage to the 3,880-metre-high Amarnath shrine in south Kashmir Himalayas will commence from 29 June and conclude on 19 August

BISHNOI'S BROTHER CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY

Shots fired outside Salman's home

MUMBAI, 14 APRIL

The Mumbai police have registered an First Information Report (FIR) after two motorbike-borne unidentified persons opened fire outside Bollywood superstar Salman Khan's house in the city's Bandra area early Sunday morning, an official said.

Lawrence Bishnoi's brother Anmol Bishnoi has taken responsibility of the shooting

The police have also recovered a two-wheeler, a little over a kilometre from the actor' home, suspected to have been used by the duo, he said.

According to the Bandra police official, an FIR has been registered against "unidentified person" under section 307 (attempt to murder) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Arms Act.

Two people fired four rounds outside Bandra's Galaxy Apartments, where the actor resides, around 5am and fled from the spot, the police official said.

Security outside Khan's residence was stepped up after the firing, he said.

The local police, crime branch personnel and a team of forensic experts reached the spot to collect evidence, including footage of the CCTV cameras installed near the actor's house, and started a probe into the incident, the official said.

There was no official word from the police or Khan's family on whether the actor was present in the house at the time of the incident.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde spoke with Khan in the wake of the firing and assured support saying the state government would not allow anybody to take the law into their hands.

In March last year, an e-mail threatening Khan was received at his office following which the Mumbai police registered an FIR against gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldy Brar. —*PTI*

Salman Khan's residence at Bandra, after two motorbike-borne unidentified people opened fire outside the residence on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

NAVRATRI FESTIVAL

Hindu devotees light lamps inside the ancient Baba Sidh Goria temple during Navratri festival, in Jammu
PHOTO: PTI

Ambedkar: The man behind India's Constitution

Ambedkar, second from the left, with his family in Mumbai
PHOTO: BBC NEWS

Ambedkar, left, at the Fourth Conference of the World Fellowships of Buddhists, held in 1956 in Nepal
PHOTO: BBC NEWS

Ambedkar was the architect of what is probably the world's longest Constitution, a legal scholar and a spiritual leader.

Most importantly, he was the undisputed leader of the Dalits (formerly untouchables), who suffered from their lowly position in a harsh caste hierarchy.

He was born on 14 April 1891, part of a family that belonged to the Hindu Mahar community, one of the untouchable castes in India at the time.

Referred to as the "darling of the dispossessed" by Indian historian Ramachandra Guha, Ambedkar's influence during the colonial era began in the 1920s, when he joined politics.

He was also known for his rejection of Hinduism as a religion that isolated the lower caste. In 1956, he started the Dalit Buddhist movement. This was a radical reinterpretation of traditional Buddhism, which he found to be flawed.

Instead, he coined the term Navayana Buddhism, which was adopted by nearly half a million Dalits at the time.

He was reportedly the first Dalit to gain entry into Elphinstone College, which was affiliated to the University of Bombay.

After completing his undergraduate degree, he moved to New York on a scholarship that afforded him the chance to pursue a graduate degree at Columbia University, where he also completed a PhD in economics.

He collected another doctorate from the London School of Economics a year later - a formidable feat, considering the socio-political barriers he had to contend with.

Soon after India gained independence in 1947, Ambedkar became the country's first law minister, and was appointed to write the nation's new Constitution.

In government, he argued for broader economic and social rights for women, the case for abolishing untouchability and for the reservation of jobs in civil services and schools for members of the lower castes.

Despite being constitutionally outlawed in 1950, the practice of untouchability and discrimination against lower castes remains widespread.

In 1946, Ambedkar founded a political party to campaign for the rights of the Dalit community.

Historians have said that his legacy as a socio-political reformer has had a profound effect on modern India, and he is often credited with representing a new kind of ambition in India - one that focused on lifting up the lower castes.

President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla offered floral tributes at the statue of Babasaheb Ambedkar in the Parliament House Complex on the occasion of his birth anniversary on Sunday.

"Babasaheb, a great son of Bharat, was not only the architect of the Indian Constitution but also a champion of social justice. He pioneered social change to build an egalitarian India, through a constitutional framework promoting rule of law, civil liberties, gender equality and empowerment of marginalised sections," Dhankhar said.

—BBC News

LETTERS write to us at salar@salar.news

SALAR ساڈا

Kids who suffer maltreatment likely to develop mental illness

These experiences affect brain health
PHOTO: UNSPLASH

Childhood maltreatment can have a long-term impact on an individual's likelihood of poor physical health and traumatic events, according to a new study.

Individuals who have experienced childhood maltreatment, such as emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, or emotional and physical neglect, are more likely to develop mental illness later in life, but it is unclear why this risk persists decades after the maltreatment occurred.

In a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, scientists from the University of Cambridge and Leiden University discovered that childhood maltreatment continues to affect adult brains because these experiences increase the likelihood of obesity, inflammation, and traumatic events, all of which are risk factors for poor health and wellbeing, affecting brain structure and thus brain health.

The researchers examined MRI brain scans from approximately 21,000 adult participants aged 40 to 70 years in UK Biobank, as well as information on body mass index (an indicator of metabolic health), CRP (a blood marker of inflammation) and experiences of childhood maltreatment and adult trauma.

Sofia Orellana, a PhD student at the Department of Psychiatry and Darwin College, University of Cambridge, said: "We've known for some time that people who experience abuse or neglect as a child can continue to experience mental health problems long into adulthood and that their experiences can also cause long term problems for the brain, the immune system and the metabolic system, which ultimately controls the health of your heart or your propensity to diabetes for instance. What hasn't been clear is how all these effects interact or reinforce each other."

Using a type of statistical modelling that allowed them to determine how these interactions work, the researchers confirmed that experiencing childhood maltreatment made individuals more likely to have an increased body mass index (or obesity) and experience greater rates of trauma in adulthood. Individuals with a history of maltreatment tended to show signs of dysfunction in their immune systems, and the researchers showed that this dysfunction is the product of obesity and repeated exposure to traumatic events.

Next, the researchers expanded their models to include MRI measures of the adult's brains and were able to show that widespread increases and decreases in brain thickness and volume associated with greater body mass index, inflammation and trauma were attributable to childhood maltreatment having made these factors more likely in the first place. These changes in brain structure likely mean that some form of physical damage is occurring to brain cells, affecting how they work and function.

Although there is more to do to understand how these effects operate at a cellular level in the brain, the researchers believe that their findings advance our understanding of how adverse events in childhood can contribute to life-long increased risk of brain and mind health disorders.

—ANI

It is unclear why the risk persists decades after the maltreatment occured
PHOTO: UNSPLASH

Why is India sealing its Myanmar border, dividing families?

- Nearly 80,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Myanmar live in India, 53,000 of them since the 2021 coup

For 61-year-old Vanlalchaka, the past few weeks have been filled with anxiety.

In the northeastern Indian border village of Zokhawthar, perched on a mountainside amid green hills, Vanlalchaka's farm has been a safe haven for refugees fleeing the civil war in neighbouring Myanmar since 2021. Five refugees live there currently and Vanlalchaka has been leading efforts in the village, which sits on the banks of the Tiau River, to help others coming from across the border.

Like his ancestors, he said, he has never acknowledged the political borders that divide his ethnic tribe – known as the Chin in Myanmar, Mizo in India's Mizoram state and Kuki in the Indian state of Manipur.

Vanlalchaka's wife, BM Thangi, is from Myanmar's Chin state. Vanlalchaka goes by a single name as is the custom in his community.

As Mizoram prepares to vote on 19 April in the first of seven phases of India's national election, its border communities are grappling with a deep rupture in their way of life.

For centuries, several Indigenous communities in India's northeastern states of Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh have shared the same ethnicity and lived on both sides of the present 1,600km (1,000-mile) international border between India and Myanmar. Their coexistence as one community, in effect, continued even after India and Myanmar gained independence because of a largely porous border.

For Vanlalchaka and others in his village, though, the politics is secondary — and the end of the free movement regime feels personal.

"The central government's [decision of] border fencing and the end of the FMR will separate our families," said Vanlalchaka. "It is just unfortunate," his wife Thangi added.

'For what?'

From trade to farming, the lives of thousands of people have long been dependent on open borders: Zokhawthar's favourite betel nuts and handmade cigarettes are bought from Myanmar; the beer cans have the country's labels; and getting around Mizoram's rugged border terrain is impractical without a Kenbo-125 motorbike — which also comes from Myanmar.

Since the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, Mizoram has hosted thousands of refugees fleeing violence, despite opposition from the federal Indian government, which in September asked the state government to collect biometric details of Myanmar refugees. The state government refused.

Nearly 80,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Myanmar live in India, 53,000 of them since the 2021 coup. Mizoram alone hosts half of them — 40,000 refugees — according to 2023 data from the UNHCR, settled in makeshift camps in villages like Zokhawthar.

200 people have been killed, thousands displaced in ethnic violence that broke out in May
PHOTO: AL JAZEERA

The pushback

The government's move has led to pushback — not just from border communities but also from political leaders in two states, including allies of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Across the border, the National Unity Government (NUG) — Myanmar's government-in-exile comprising lawmakers removed in the 2021 coup — too has concerns about India's policy shift.

The official said the NUG had articulated its concerns to India. "New Delhi needs to acknowledge that the FMR is a humanitarian requirement," the official said. "A country of India's stature should not impose that kind of humanitarian crisis on our people."

Fencing the border and ending free movement is also risky in the long run for New Delhi, which for decades has had a tense relationship with India's northeast — a region that saw major secessionist movements, some of which are still alive.

Border insecurity

To be sure, India does have its own genuine security concerns.

The Tatmadaw, the Myanmar army, has suffered significant blows in recent months, with the rebel Arakan Army running over many military outposts and making territorial gains in western Myanmar.

The Manipur piece of the puzzle

However, some analysts also question whether India's new policy position is driven in part by another crisis — entirely within India — in the state of Manipur, to Mizoram's north.

More than 200 people have been killed and thousands more displaced in ethnic violence that broke out in May 2023 and has raged ever since between the Meitei majority population of Manipur and the Kuki and Naga minorities. The state's BJP government has been accused of fanning tensions to consolidate its Meitei support base — a charge the party has denied.

BJP in turn has denied those charges and blamed "illegal migrants" from Myanmar for the violence.

In the past, Choudhary pointed out, Indian governments — including Modi's — have refrained from moving ahead with border fencing even after deadly ambushes on Indian security personnel by armed fighters who crossed over from Myanmar. If it goes ahead with fencing this time around, the Modi government risks further alienating already remote communities and "sparking a cycle of discontent, and of violence", said Choudhary.

—Al Jazeera

14 dead, 3 missing as landslides hit Indonesia

TARA TORAJA, 14 APRIL

Torrential rains triggered landslides on Indonesia's Sulawesi island, killing at least 14 people and leaving three others missing, officials said Sunday. Mud fell from surrounding hills onto four houses just before midnight Saturday in the Tana Toraja district of South Sulawesi province, said local police chief Gunardi Mundu. He said a family gathering was being held in one of the affected houses. Dozens of soldiers, police and volunteers joined the search in the villages of Makale and South Makale, in a remote, hilly area, Mundu said. Rescuers early Sunday managed to pull out two injured people, including an 8-year-old girl, and rushed them to a nearby hospital. Rescuers by Sunday afternoon had recovered at least 11 bodies in Makale village and three bodies in South Makale, and were still searching for three others, including a 3-year-old girl, said Disaster Management spokesperson Abdul Muhari. *—PTI*

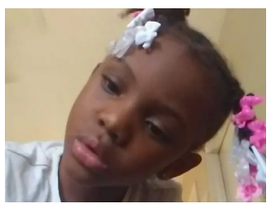


PHOTO: PTI

Chicago shooting kills 7-year-old girl and wounds 7 more

CHICAGO, 14 APRIL

Eight people were shot including a young girl who was killed in what Chicago police believe was gang-related violence on the city's South Side on Saturday night. The 7-year-old girl was shot in the head and died, while a 1-year-old boy and a 7-year-old boy were each shot multiple times and listed in critical condition, Chicago Police Department Deputy Chief Don Jerome said in a news briefing at the scene on a block of 52nd Street near Damen Avenue. Police responding to a gunfire alert around 9 p.m. applied tourniquets and chest seals to victims, who also included adults between the ages of 19 and 40, Jerome said. The victims, who were standing outside at a family gathering at the time of the shooting, were transported to area hospitals by the Chicago Fire Department.*—AP*

Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif felicitates Sikhs on Baisakhi

ISLAMABAD, 14 APRIL

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday felicitated the Sikhs on the occasion of the Baisakhi festival as about 3,000 Indian Sikhs arrived in Punjab province to participate in the celebrations. In his message, Prime Minister Sharif described Baisakhi as the "symbol of spring season and the festival of spreading love and happiness". He said "Pakistan is a beautiful blend of different faiths and cultures" and the colour of Baisakhi further added to this beauty. Sharif said that the Government of Pakistan and its provincial governments will provide all-out facilities to Sikh pilgrims coming from all over the world to perform Baisakhi rituals. The main event of the Sikh religious festival, Baisakhi Mela, will be held at Gurudwara Panja Sahib in Hasan Abdal on Sunday. *—PTI*

China detains 2 over boat capsizing that killed 12

BEIJING, 14 APRIL

Two people have been detained following the capsizing of a tourist boat on a river in northeastern China that led to the drowning deaths of 12 visitors, state media reported Sunday. The accident occurred Saturday afternoon outside the city of Qinhuangdao near the coast of Hebei province, a few hour's drive from the capital Beijing. A total of 31 people were thrown into the water. The boat was made by local villagers and unequipped with life jackets or other safety equipment. The boat's owner and operator were held while an investigation into the accident was underway. *—AP*

Iran warns Israel against rash retaliation

UK deploys several jets, air refuelling tankers in response to Iranian attack on Israel

TEHRAN, 14 APRIL

Iran has reiterated a warning to Israel on Sunday, saying it should not respond to its unprecedented attack on Israeli territory and that its next steps would be bigger should this happen.

The Iranian armed forces chief of staff, Major General Mohammad Bagheri, told state TV that if Israeli retaliates, Iran's response would be "much larger" than the overnight bombardment, Reuters reports. Iran also warned Washington that backing Israeli retaliation would lead to the targeting of US bases.

Earlier, Iran's mission to the UN cited the UN Charter provision for self-defence, under Article 51, and said that the country considered "this matter... concluded" after its barrage against Israel, while also warning Israeli against making "another mistake".

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has condemned Iran's attack against Israel as "reckless" and pledged that the UK would stand up for security in the region after Tehran launched dozens of aerial drones and cruise missiles overnight on Saturday and into Sunday.

The UK's Ministry of Defence (MoD) said late on Saturday that several additional Royal Air Force fighter jets had been moved to the region to help intercept the drone attacks. The aircraft and air-fuelling tankers are being deployed as part of the UK's ongoing Operation Shader against the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist group in the region.

Israeli Iron Dome air defense system launches to intercept missiles fired from Iran, in central Israel, Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

"I condemn in the strongest terms the Iranian regime's reckless attack against Israel," said Sunak in a statement issued by 10 Downing Street. "These strikes risk inflaming tensions and destabilising the region. Iran has once again demonstrated that it is intent on sowing chaos in its own backyard," said the British Indian leader. "Alongside our allies, we are urgently working to stabilise the situation and prevent further escalation. No one wants to see more bloodshed," he added. The Israeli military said it intercepted the majority of the attacks with the help of other countries, including the US.

Iran wouldn't have attacked Israel 'if I were President': Trump

Donald Trump blasted President Joe Biden over Iran's major attack on Israel, alleging that his rival in November elections showed American "weakness" in the Middle East. "God bless the people of Israel. They are under attack right now. That's because we show great weakness," he said. Trump, who while in office ordered the killing of a top Revolutionary Guard leader in Baghdad and withdrew the United States from the Iran nuclear accord, has repeatedly accused his Democratic opponent of a soft approach toward Tehran.

—BBC News with Agencies

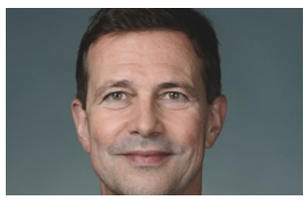
Biden blasts 'brazen attack' and backs Israel's security

WASHINGTON, 14 APRIL

US President Joe Biden has praised American forces who he said "helped Israel take down nearly all" the drones and missiles launched by Iran on Sunday. In a statement, he said the US had moved aircraft and warships to the region before the unprecedented attack. "I condemn these attacks in the strongest possible terms," he added. Israel said Iran launched hundreds of drones and missiles in its direction, the first time it has attacked Israel directly from its own territory. It said the "vast majority" were intercepted, but there were a small number of hits including at an IDF base in southern Israel. At least one person, reported to be a young girl, was injured. Iran earlier warned that Israel would be "punished" for a strike on its consulate in Syria on 1 April, which killed seven Iranian officers including a top commander. Israel has not confirmed or denied whether it was responsible. "I've just spoken with Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu to reaffirm America's ironclad commitment to the security of Israel," Biden said shortly after the pair held a call. "I told him that Israel demonstrated a remarkable capacity to defend against and defeat even unprecedented attacks," he added. *—BBC News*

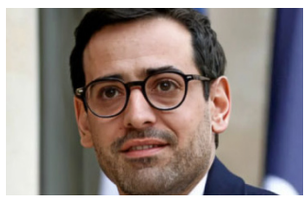
"After supporting Hamas' brutal October 7 attack, the Iranian regime's latest actions will further destabilise the region and make lasting peace more difficult."

-Justin Trudeau, Canadian Prime Minister



Germany's solidarity is with all Israelis whom Iran is terrorising with this attack: the Bedouins in the Negev as well as the Druze in the Golan. May they all be safe

-Steffen Seibert, German Ambassador



By deciding on such an unprecedented action, Iran is taking a new step in its destabilizing actions and taking the risk of a military escalation."

-Stephane Sejourne, French Foreign Minister

NEW YEAR WATER FESTIVAL

Merrymakers take part in the second day celebrations of the Myanmar New Year water festival Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

China reaffirms ties with North Korea

BEIJING, 14 APRIL

A top ranking Chinese official reaffirmed ties with North Korea during a meeting in Pyongyang on Saturday with the country's leader, Kim Jong-un, China's state media reported, in the highest-level talks between the allies in years.

The visit by Zhao Leji, who ranks third in the ruling Communist party hierarchy and heads the ceremonial parliament, came as North Korea has test-fired missiles to intimidate South Korea and its ally, the US. The Xinhua news agency reported that Zhao told Kim at the meeting concluding his three-day visit that China, North Korea's most important source of economic aid and diplomatic support, looked forward to further developing ties, but made no mention of the political situation on the peninsula or the region. Since the establishment of diplomatic ties 75 years ago, China and North Korea have been "good neighbours and struggled together to attain a common destiny and level of development", Xinhua quoted Zhao as saying.

China reaffirms ties with North Korea in high-level meeting *PHOTO: X/@GUARDIAN*

China fought on behalf of the reclusive communist state against the US and others during the 1950-1953 Korean war, and in recent years has helped prop up its weak economy, allegedly in violation of UN sanctions in response to Pyongyang's nuclear weapons programme, which Beijing had endorsed.

—Courtesy, The Guardian

Trump hush money trial is far from a slam dunk

NEW YORK, 14 APRIL

An adult film star. Alleged secret payments. A turncoat lawyer. And a candidate for president of the United States.

Donald Trump's very first criminal trial - and the first of a former US president - involves charges of white-collar crime, but it features some of the most eye-catching details in any of the four criminal cases against him. The case revolves around a $130,000 (£104,000) hush money payment from Mr Trump's lawyer to adult-film actress Stormy Daniels, who claims she had an affair with Trump in 2006. But that payment was not actually illegal. Instead, the blockbuster case bringing 34 felony charges is based on allegations the former president falsified business records to cover up the payment - made just before the 2016 election - to avoid an embarrassing sex scandal which he denies. The trial, which starts in New York on Monday, has legal experts divided on the strength of the case. Some debate whether Manhattan's District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a Democrat, should have even brought the case and whether it is strong enough.

Ambrosio Rodriguez, a former prosecutor who says he is no fan of the former president, believes the case legitimises Trump's ongoing argument that he is being prosecuted unfairly because of who he is. Rodriguez argues that the case relies on old allegations, noting that federal prosecutors had investigated and declined to bring charges. "This is a waste of time and a bad idea, and not good for the country," he told BBC. *—BBC News*

PROBE ON

Sydney police identify mall attacker who killed six

SYDNEY, 14 APRIL

Police have identified the assailant who stabbed six people to death at a busy Sydney shopping centre before he was fatally shot by a police officer.

New South Wales Police said Sunday that Joel Cauchi, 40, was responsible for the Saturday afternoon attack at the Westfield Shopping Centre in Bondi Junction, in the city's eastern suburbs and not far from the world-famous Bondi Beach. NSW Assistant Police Commissioner Anthony Cooke told reporters at a media conference on Sunday that Cauchi suffered from yet unspecified mental health issues and police investigators weren't treating the attack as terrorism-related.

"We are continuing to work through the profiling of the offender but very clearly to us at this stage it would appear that this is related to the mental health of the individual involved," Cooke said. "There is still, to this point... no information we have received, no evidence we have recovered, no intelligence that we have gathered that would suggest that this was driven by any particular motivation - ideology or otherwise," he added.

The attack at the shopping center, one of the country's busiest and which was a hub of activity on a particularly warm fall afternoon, began around 3:10 pm and police were swiftly called. Six people —five women and one man, aged between 20 and 55 — were killed in the attack and 12 others remain in hospital, including a 9-month-old child, whose mother died. Two of the six victims were from overseas and have no family in Australia, Cooke said on Sunday. Video footage shared online appears to show many people fleeing as a knife-wielding Cauchi walked through the shopping center and lunging at people. Other footage shows a man confronting the attacker on an escalator in the shopping center by holding what appeared to be a post towards him. Cauchi was shot dead by a lone female police officer at the scene. *—AP*

A crowd gathers outside Westfield Shopping Centre in Sydney *PHOTO: PTI*

'She is a hero': Aus PM hails cop who shot attacker

SYDENY, 14 APRIL

An Australian police officer has been hailed as a hero by the country's prime minister, after she confronted and shot dead a man who fatally stabbed six people at a Sydney shopping centre.

"There is no doubt that she saved lives," PM Anthony Albanese said, calling Saturday's attack "a horrific act of violence". Police described how the officer, Insp Amy Scott, bravely tracked attacker Joel Cauchi through the mall, challenged him and shot him dead after he raised his knife towards her. "A man walked into Westfield at Bondi Junction... as he moved through the centre he engaged with about nine people," Anthony Cooke, assistant commissioner of New South Wales Police, said. "It is clear that during that engagement he caused harm to those people... stabbing them with a weapon he was carrying.

"Very clearly a range of reports were made on the incident, police attended promptly - a single unit officer, inspector of police, was nearby, attended, and went into the centre directed by a range of people. *—BBC News*

Amy Scott *PHOTO: AP*

WELCOMING RUSSIAN INSTRUCTORS

Niger demands US troop withdrawal

NIAMEY, 14 APRIL

Hundreds of protesters have taken to the streets of Niger's capital to demand the departure of United States troops, after the military government further shifted its strategy by ending a military accord with the US and welcoming Russian military instructors.

Marching arm in arm through central Niamey on Saturday, the crowd waved Nigerien flags in a demonstration that recalled anti-French protests that spurred the withdrawal of France's forces from Niger last year after the army seized power in a coup.

One hand-written sign in English read "USA rush out of Niger", in a show of support for the military government and its decision in mid-March to revoke an accord that had allowed around 1,000 US military personnel to operate on its territory out of two bases.

Hundreds of protesters have taken to the streets *PHOTO: X/@AL JAZEERA*

"We're here to say no to the American base, we don't want Americans on our soil," protester Maria Saley told the Reuters news agency on the sidelines of the march. The crowd was also heard chanting "Down with American imperialism" and "The people's liberation is on the march."

Until the coup, Niger had remained a key security partner of France and the US, which used it as a base as part of international efforts to curb a decade-old rebellion in West Africa's Sahel region. In March the country suspended its military agreement with the US. The US military had some 650 personnel working in Niger in December, according to a White House report to Congress. The US military operates a major airbase in the Niger city of Agadez, some 920km (572 miles) from Niamey, using it for manned and unmanned surveillance flights and other operations.

A drone base known as Air Base 201 near Agadez was also built at a cost of more than $100m. Since 2018 the base has been used to target ISIL fighters and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen, an al-Qaeda affiliate, in the Sahel region.

—Al Jazeera

FSSAI asks food outlets to adhere to display of rules

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Food safety regulator Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has advised food service establishments to adhere and display calorific value, allergen, nutritional information in foods they serve as per mandated rules. After receiving representation regarding misinterpretation of display of information, it has written to commissioners of food safety across the states. As per rules, a licence holder having food outlets at 10 or more locations shall mention the calorific value against the food items displayed on the menu cards or boards or booklets. They shall also mention the information relating to food allergens and logo for veg or non-veg against the food items displayed on the menu cards or boards Also, they shall provide nutritional information, For e-commerce food business operators, they shall get the above mentioned information from respective Food Business Operators and provide on their website wherever applicable. —*ANI*

DoT to seek Trai's view on satcom spectrum allocation

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is expected to approach Trai this month to seek the regulator's views on method and pricing for allocation of spectrum and scope of licences to be issued for satcom services, according to sources. "DoT will seek views of Trai on pricing and methodology to allocate spectrum for space based communication services. It may also look to fine-tune existing licences to bring in full clarity on services that satcom companies with administratively allocated spectrum can provide," a source, said.—*PTI*

Digi Yatra working to address tailgating issue

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Stakeholders, including the Digi Yatra Foundation, are working on ways to address tailgating at airports through the Digi Yatra gates, an issue that has been flagged by aviation security watchdog BCAS, according to officials. Digi Yatra, which uses Facial Recognition Technology (FRT), provides contactless and seamless entry into airports through e-gates. Broadly, tailgating refers to an additional person getting through a gate whereas the credentials for access have been used for only one person. As part of the routine review of various security aspects, an official in the know said the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has flagged tailgating at Digi Yatra gates and that discussions are going on to address the issue. In a recent interview, Digi Yatra Foundation CEO Suresh Khadakbhavi said that stakeholders are discussing the best way forward to address the issue of tailgating. Currently, Digi Yatra is available at 14 airports and is expected to be rolled out at 14 more airports by the end of April. —*PTI*

Godrej Locks eyes 50% market share

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Locks and security solutions company Godrej Locks has said it aims to increase market share from 30 per cent to 50 per cent in three years, riding on a new range of affordable products and reduced prices of existing ones. Shyam Motwani, business head for Godrej Locks and architectural and systems, said the company's newly-launched products are over 50 per cent affordable than the existing locks, while efforts have been undertaken to make the existing locks cheaper by 7-8 per cent. The company will rely on new affordable range and price cuts in the existing locks to achieve the objective of having the dominant market share in around three years, Motwani said. The target is to grab 50 per cent market in the segment from the current 30 per cent, Motwani said, adding that the company sees a massive opportunity for its products in the tier-2,3, 4 cities and towns. —*PTI*

India forex reserves hit $648 billion

It is reserves' rise for 7th consecutive week

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

India's foreign exchange reserves rose for the seventh straight week to hit a fresh all-time high of USD 648.562 billion in the week ending on 5 April, as per the latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The foreign exchange kitty was at USD 645.583 billion prior to the week that ended on 5 April.

India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the biggest component of the forex reserves rose by USD 549 million to USD 571.166 billion, the central bank's weekly statistical data showed.

Gold reserves during the week rose by USD 2.398 billion to USD 54.558 billion.

In the calendar year 2023, the RBI added about USD 58 billion to its foreign exchange kitty. In 2022, India's forex kitty slumped by USD 71 billion cumulatively.

Foreign exchange reserves have risen about USD 28 billion, on a cumulative basis, in 2024 so far.

Forex reserves, or foreign exchange reserves (FX reserves), are assets that are held by a nation's central bank or monetary authority.

It is generally held in reserve currencies, usually the US Dollar and, to a lesser degree, the Euro, Japanese Yen, and Pound Sterling.

Foreign exchange reserves have risen about USD 28 billion, on a cumulative basis, in 2024 so far PHOTO: PTI

- India's foreign exchange reserves rose for the seventh straight week to hit a fresh all-time high of USD 648.562 billion in the week ending on 5 April, as per the latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The country's foreign exchange reserves last touched their all-time high in October 2021. Much of the decline after that can be attributed to a rise in the cost of imported goods in 2022.

Also, the relative fall in forex reserves could be linked to the RBI's intervention, from time to time, in the market to defend the uneven depreciation in the rupee against a surging US dollar.

Typically, the RBI, from time to time, intervenes in the market through liquidity management, including through the sale of dollars, to prevent a steep depreciation in the rupee.

The RBI closely monitors the foreign exchange markets and intervenes only to maintain orderly market conditions by containing excessive volatility in the exchange rate, without reference to any pre-determined target level or band.

—*ANI*

BHARTI AIRTEL, ICICI BANK GAINERS

Market valuation of 7 most valued firms climb ₹59,404 crore

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The combined market valuation of seven of the ten most valued firms climbed Rs 59,404.85 crore in a holiday-shortened last week, with Bharti Airtel and ICICI Bank emerging as the biggest gainers. Stock markets were closed on Thursday on account of Eid-Ul-Fitr.

Last week, Sensex dipped marginally by 3.32 points after a record-breaking rally. The BSE benchmark had settled at an all-time high of 75,038.15 on Wednesday. It scaled the lifetime peak of 75,124.28 on Tuesday.

The market valuation of Bharti Airtel jumped Rs 19,029.37 crore to Rs 6,92,861.27 crore.

ICICI Bank added Rs 15,363.23 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 7,75,447.63 crore.

Reliance Industries' valuation climbed Rs 10,250.02 crore to Rs 19,85,797.70 crore, and that of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) soared Rs 7,507.53 crore to Rs 14,47,343.55 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of ITC rallied Rs 2,809.06 crore to Rs 5,36,967.87 crore, while Infosys climbed Rs 2,303.73 crore to Rs 6,16,424.57 crore. State Bank of India's market valuation jumped Rs 2,141.91 crore to Rs 6,84,294.62 crore. However, the mcap of HDFC Bank tanked Rs 23,170.58 crore to Rs 11,53,894.76 crore.

The valuation of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) dropped by Rs 13,440.62 crore to Rs 6,14,252.15 crore. The mcap of Hindustan Unilever declined by Rs 8,153.08 crore to Rs 5,24,663.73 crore. In the ranking of top-10 firms, Reliance Industries continued to retain the title of the most valued company, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Infosys, LIC, ITC and Hindustan Unilever. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- The market valuation of Bharti Airtel jumped Rs 19,029.37 crore to Rs 6,92,861.27 crore

MARKETS TO TRACK EARNINGS, DATA IN THE COMING WEEK

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Geopolitical events, macroeconomic data and quarterly earnings of corporates would guide the stock market in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said. Stock markets will remain closed on Wednesday for Ram Navami.

"This week promises to be crucial for the market as fresh worries about a potential conflict between Iran and Israel emerge. Any significant escalation in tensions could trigger panic selling and volatility in global equity markets. The market will also be closely monitoring the movement of crude oil prices, which are often impacted by geopolitical events," said , Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd. Santosh Meena.

Investors will be watching for earnings reports from Infosys, Bajaj Auto, and Wipro later in the week, he said.. Shares of TCS will remain in focus on Monday. The company reported its January-March quarterly earnings on Friday. The IT services major logged a 9 per cent growth in net profit at Rs 12,434 crore in the fourth quarter of FY24 due to strong domestic business even as the company struggled in its key markets overseas.

Retail inflation declined to a five-month low of 4.85 per cent in March mainly due to cooling food prices, inching towards the Reserve Bank's target of 4 per cent, according to official data released on Friday. —*PTI*

DISSOLUTION SPECIFICATIONS

Glenmark recalls 6,528 bottles of BP drug in US

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals is recalling 6,528 bottles of a medication used to treat high blood pressure in the American market due to failed dissolution specifications, the US health regulator said. The US-based arm of the Mumbai-headquartered drug firm is recalling the affected lot of Diltiazem Hydrochloride extended-release capsules, the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) said in its latest Enforcement Report.

The affected lot has been produced in India and is being recalled by New Jersey-based Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Inc for "failed dissolution specifications", the USFDA said.

"Out of Specification (OOS) was reported in a test of dissolution at the 12th month time point in long-term stability study," it noted.

Glenmark initiated Class II recall of the drug across the US on 26 March this year.

As per the USFDA, a Class II recall is initiated in a situation in which the use of, or exposure to, a violative product may cause temporary or medically reversible adverse health consequences or where the probability of serious adverse health consequences is remote.

India is the largest supplier of generic medicines with around 20 per cent share in the global supply by manufacturing 60,000 different generic brands across 60 therapeutic categories. The products manufactured in the country are shipped to over 200 countries around the globe, with Japan, Australia, West Europe and the US as the main destinations.

India has the highest number of USFDA-compliant companies with plants outside of the US.

—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: PTI

INDIA ADDS 18 GW RENEWABLE ENERGY CAPACITY IN FY24

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

India has added a record renewable energy capacity of 18.48 GW in 2023-24, which is over 21 per cent higher than 15.27 GW a year ago, according to the latest data of the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE). However, industry experts said there is a need to add at least 50 GW of renewable energy capacity annually for the next six years to meet the ambitious target of 500 GW of renewables by 2030.

According to the data, India's installed renewable energy capacity is 143.64 GW as of March 31, 2024, excluding 47 GW of large hydropower capacity (each plant is more than 25 GW or above).Among the states, Gujarat and Rajasthan have the largest renewable energy capacities of about 27GW each, followed by Tamil Nadu. —*PTI*

LIC sees 59% jump in value of investments in Adani stocks

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

LIC, the state-owned insurance behemoth, has seen a 59 per cent rise in value of its investments in Adani group companies in 2023-24 fiscal year after the conglomerate made a smart recovery since being hammered by a damning short seller report.

The value of LIC's investment in seven Adani group companies has soared from Rs 38,471 crore as on 31 March, 2023 to Rs 61,210 crore on 31 March, 2024, registering an increase of Rs 22,378 crore, according to stock exchange data.

Last year, the insurance giant faced intense scrutiny over its decision to invest in the Adani group amidst a political slugfest after allegations of stock manipulation fuelled by Hindenburg report.

Adani Group's stocks, which at lowest point took a beating of about USD 150 billion, have staged a remarkable comeback, fuelled by robust profit growth across its diverse businesses.

Facing political pressure, LIC strategically reduced its exposure to two of the group's flagship companies -- Adani Ports & SEZ and Adani Enterprises -- only to witness their shares surge by an impressive 83 per cent and 68.4 per cent, respectively.

Despite trimming its ownership, LIC investments saw a 59 per cent surge in value in FY24, according to stock exchange data. The value of LIC's investment in Adani Enterprise Ltd soared from Rs 8,495.31 crore as on 31 March, 2023 to Rs 14,305.53 crore a year later, the data showed.

LIC's investment in Adani Green Energy Ltd saw the biggest rise with value more than doubling to Rs 3,937.62 crore in one year.

—*PTI*

LIC's investment in Adani Green Energy Ltd saw the biggest rise with value more than doubling to Rs 3,937.62 crore in one year PHOTO: PTI

- Adani Group's stocks, which at lowest point took a beating of about USD 150 billion, have staged a remarkable comeback, fuelled by robust profit growth across its diverse businesses

FOR THE UNDERPRIVILEGED

Super 30 founder Anand Kumar to unveil online ed platform

WASHINGTON, 14 APRIL

Super 30 founder and mathematician Anand Kumar has said that he would soon launch a new online educational platform to take education to the doorsteps of the poor and underprivileged students in India. In his speech at the 2024 Kellogg India Business Conference on the theme "Reimagining India: Shaping the Global Economic Landscape," organized by the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, Kumar said that the time has come to embrace the available technology to reach out to more and more students.

"Time has come to embrace the available technology to reach out to more and more students. Super 30 made me growing aspirations of the poor to change their lives and many of the students who passed out did bright about a generational shift due to the power of education. A new online educational platform will be launched soon to take education to the doorsteps of the poor in what would be an expanded version of his pioneering Super 30 initiative," Kumar said.

Maintaining that the disruption caused by the life-changing COVID pandemic taught him a lot, as connected with students stuck in home through social media to engage with them, Kumar said one could learn a lot from adversities.

"The world is full of talented people. Even in the present scenario, there are so many children hidden from the eyes of the world due to poverty. They have ability to become Newton and Ramanujan but perhaps their talent gets lost due to a lack of opportunity. My online initiative is aimed at giving them the platform to excel," he added.

Kumar said it would fulfil that has been his dream to see every underprivileged student educated.

"The poorest also deserve quality education. Time has come to move out of the labs to get a feel of poverty in nations and villages, where people don't even get electricity, clean water and proper food. Now the time has come and technology is also there to connect with the poor irrespective of region," he said. According to Kumar the best use of technology would be to ensure that opportunities must reach the have-nots.

—*PTI*

According to Anand Kumar, the best use of technology would be to ensure that opportunities must reach the have-nots PHOTO: PTI

- Maintaining that the disruption caused by the life-changing COVID pandemic taught him a lot, as connected with students stuck in home through social media to engage with them, Kumar said one could learn a lot from adversities

FPIs bought ₹13,347cr worth India stocks so far in April

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) continued to remain net buyers for the third month in April in Indian stock markets. So far in the month, they bought stocks worth Rs 13,347 crore in India, National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) data showed.

Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) involves an investor buying foreign financial assets.

FPIs had aggressively sold Indian stocks and turned net sellers in the Indian equity market in January 2024, before turning net buyers thereafter.

"A major concern is the surcharged geopolitical situation in the Middle East with heightened tensions between Iran and Israel. These will keep the markets on tenterhooks in the near-term," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, on the FPI outlook.

In March, they bought stocks worth Rs 35,098 crore.

Firm GDP growth forecasts, inflation at manageable levels, political stability at the central government level and signs that the central bank is done tightening its monetary policy have all contributed to painting a bright picture for the Indian economy.

India's GDP grew at a massive 8.4 per cent during the October-December quarter of the financial year 2023-24, and the country continued to remain the fastest-growing major economy.

The foreign portfolio sold aggressively in January after making a beeline to accumulate domestic stocks during the prior two months--November and December.

In December, they accumulated stocks worth Rs 66,135 crore. In November, the FPI inflow was Rs 9,001 crore, NSDL data showed.

—*ANI*

India's GDP grew at a massive 8.4 per cent during the October-December quarter of the financial year 2023-24 PHOTO: ANI

PHOTO: PTI

AUTOMOBILE EXPORTS FROM INDIA DIP 5.5% IN FY24

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Automobile exports from India declined 5.5 per cent in FY24 due to the monetary crisis in various overseas markets, according to the latest data shared by industry body SIAM.

Overall exports stood at 45,00,492 units in the last fiscal compared to 47,61,299 units in FY23.

Commenting on the drop in overseas shipments last fiscal, SIAM President Vinod Aggarwal said the situation remains volatile in various overseas markets.

"Some of the countries, where we are very strong with commercial vehicle and two-wheeler exports, have been facing foreign exchange-related issues," he noted.

However, in the January-March quarter this year, we have seen good recovery, especially for two-wheelers, indicating better potential for the rest of the year, he said.

Two-wheeler exports witnessed a dip of 5.3 per cent last fiscal at 34,58,416 units compared to 36,52,122 units in 2022-23.

—*PTI*

KKR's Salt, Starc combo prove too hot for LSG

Lucknow suffered their first ever defeat against KKR

KOLKATA, 14 APRIL

Opening batter Phil Salt's magnificent 89 not out complemented pacer Mitchell Starc's brilliant bowling show as Kolkata Knight Riders began their five-match home stretch with a one-sided eight-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants in the Indian Premier League on Sunday.

The IPL's record buy Starc, who copped criticism for taking just two wickets from four matches and leaking 11 runs per over, grabbed 3/28, while Sunil Narine returned with figures of 1/17 in his miserly spell as LSG scored a below-par 161/7 after KKR opted to bowl.

The duo's bowling show eventually denied 20-30 runs for LSG who suffered their first ever defeat against KKR.

Salt smashed three sixes and 14 fours in his 47-ball 89 not out, while captain Shreyas Iyer overcame a wobbly start to remain unbeaten on a run-a-ball 38 as KKR chased down the target of 162 with 26 balls to spare.

The duo stitched an unbroken stand of 120 from 76 balls to take KKR to 162 form 2 in 15.4 overs.

Hooda finally perished for eight in the fifth over thanks to Ramandeep's flying catch at deep backward point as KKR's fielding looked vastly improved.

After being 111/5 in 14.4 overs, LSG recovered in the back end with Nicholas Pooran's counter-attacking innings.

Pooran smashed four sixes and two fours as LSG looked for a total of around 190 on the difficult pitch. Just when he was closing in on his fifty, Starc (3/28) had the last laugh in the final over. *—PTI*

Kolkata Knight Riders batters Shreyas Iyer and Phil Salt celebrate after Kolkata won the match at Eden Gardens in Kolkata on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

TODAY'S MATCH

RCB ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU vs SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

Time: 7.30 pm

Where To Watch:

Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru

RCB BRACE FOR SRH'S FIREWORKS AT CHINNASWAMY

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's IPL campaign that began in cheerfulness has melted into chaos, and their bowlers require a drastic transformation in mind set against Sunrisers Hyderabad for them to register an elusive win on Monday.

Royal Challengers have players of repute and elite coaches with lofty pedigree but none of their plans have worked so far, evidenced by the team's 10th place in the standings with a solitary win from six matches. They showed a distinct lack of willingness to adapt and upskill on conditions that needed a different thinking. But Hyderabad outfit has found a saviour in skipper Pat Cummins, their highest wicket-taker with six scalps and he has also conceded just over seven runs an over, a very respectable economy rate in this format.

For once, the RCB batters fired collectively to take them to 196, but MI hunted down the target in just 15.3 overs at the Wankhede Stadium as the visiting bowlers was quite magnanimous in offering freebies.

Star batter Virat Kohli is the current holder of Orange Cap and fifties by skipper Faf du Plessis, Rajat Patidar and Dinesh Karthik against MI will certainly boost RCB's confidence. But the form of Glenn Maxwell (32 runs, average: 5.3) remains a massive concern. *—PTI*

PREMIER LEAGUE CHALLENGE

Crystal Palace players celebrate after scoring goal ***PHOTO: X/@CPFC***

Liverpool loses 1-0 to Crystal Palace

LIVERPOOL, 14 APRIL

Liverpool's season is starting to unravel. A 1-0 loss at home to Crystal Palace damaged Liverpool's Premier League title challenge on Sunday, three days after a 3-0 defeat to Atalanta at Anfield in the first leg of the Europa League quarterfinals.

Eberechi Eze's 14th-minute goal for Palace consigned Liverpool to its first loss in the league at Anfield in 28 matches — stretching back to October 2022. It was the 21st time the Reds have gone behind in 32 league games this season and they couldn't recover, despite Wataru Endo hitting the crossbar midway through the first half and Darwin Nunez and Curtis Jones squandering golden chances in front of the Kop after the break.

Liverpool started the weekend in second place, behind Arsenal on goal difference, but is now two points adrift of Manchester City after the champions' 5-1 thrashing of Luton on Saturday. Arsenal can regain the lead by beating Aston Villa later Sunday.

Liverpool lost last month to Manchester United in the FA Cup quarterfinals, ending Jurgen Klopp's team's unlikely quadruple hopes with the League Cup already secured. In the past week, Liverpool has drawn at United, this time in the league, and now sustained back-to-back home losses in different competitions. *—AP*

Scheffler leads Masters as ailing Woods shoots 82

LONDON, 14 APRIL

Scheffler, who is the hottest favourite at Augusta since Woods in his 2000s pomp, shot a one-under 71 to move seven under and one clear of Collin Morikawa. Morikawa carded a 69 for six under, with Max Homa, 73, next on five under. Bryson DeChambeau, who jointly led overnight, hit a 75 and is three under, while Woods is 11 over after an 82. DeChambeau - a home hope like Scheffler, Morikawa and Homa - reignited his bid by holing out from the 18th fairway for a birdie on what had been a chastening day at Augusta National. The 30-year-old moved back up to fifth on the leaderboard, a shot behind Swedish debutant Ludvig Aberg, who carded 70 after two bogeys in the final four holes. *—BBC News*

Gaurav Gill finishes Day 1 of Otago Rally in top three

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

JK Tyre's Gaurav Gill showcased a strong performance in the Rally of Otago, securing a top-three finish on day 1. He maintained his third position consistently until stage 10. However, an unexpected challenge in stage 11 forced him to withdraw from the race. Gaurav Gill and his New Zealand-based co-driver, Jared Hudson, were piloting a Hyundai i20 N Rally2 car when, at the 7.2 Km mark in Special Stage 11 (SS11), the car hit a pothole, causing a suspension issue. Despite their attempts to fix the car, the duo was forced to withdraw from the race. Apart from this technical setback, Gill demonstrated a strong performance throughout the rally, showcasing his dedication to the sport. This was Gaurav's maiden outing in the Otago Rally and his entry was also backed by Indian businessman Vamcy Merla, who is also a promoter of the rally. *—ANI*

Alcaraz withdrawns from Barcelona Open with injury

LONDON, 14 APRIL

Wimbledon champion and world number three has won the title in the past two years, but has been suffering from a right forearm problem. Alcaraz, 20, had also withdrawn from this week's Monte Carlo Masters, where he was drawn to play Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime on Wednesday. The Barcelona Open started with qualifying rounds on Saturday and is set for Rafael Nadal's comeback. Alcaraz was the two-time defending champion at the Barcelona Open, having lifted the trophy in 2022 and 2023. A statement from the tournament posted on social media said: "The player has suffered from the injury sustained in Monte Carlo, and did not have a good feeling in his training on Sunday. Wishing you a speedy recovery, we hope to see you next year." *—BBC News*

Anju, Harshita reach Asian Championship

BISHKEK, 14 APRIL

Railways wrestler Anju, who had outclassed Vinesh Phogat in the recent selection trials, and Harshita put up a dominant show to reach the gold medal bouts in their respective categories at the Asian Championships, but Sarita Mor was eliminated after a shock defeat in her opening round Sunday. Competing in a highly competitive 53kg weight class category, Anju logged back-to-back wins by technical superiority against Philippines' Aliah Rose Gavalez and Sri Lanka's Nethmi Ahinsa Fernando. She faced some resistance from China's Chun Lei before prevailing 9-6 in the semifinal. However, a big shock was in store for the Indian squad as 2021 World Championship medallist Sarita lost her quarterfinal bout 4-8 to Mongolia's Gantuya Enkhbat. *—PTI*

Fahd Sultan wins trap gold, Prabhat silver

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Indian marksman Fahd Sultan won the gold medal at the All India Manav Rachna Open Shotgun competition, pushing Prabhat Kumar and Aryavansh Tyagi to second and third spots respectively on Sunday.

Sultan, who recently competed in the Asian Championships in Kuwait and is the son of Olympian trap marksman Anwar Sultan, shot 42 out of 50 in the final, while Prabhat scored 37 and Aryavansh 31.

The unique thing about the competition was three top male and an equal number of women trap exponents made it to the six-shooter finals.

The three women shooters who made it to the final were Aadya Tripathi, Bhavna Chaudhdry and Katha Kapoor.

Aadya Tripathi, 22, who has competed in several World Junior Championships in 2021 and 2022, was unlucky to get eliminated on fourth position with a score of 25. She had shot a superb 44/50 in qualification.

"But since an equal number of male and female competitors were allowed in the medal round, one of us missed out on a final berth," said Aadya.

Asian Championships gold-medallist shot-putter Om Prakash Karhana said, "The purpose of the competition was to give equal platform to both men and women shooters." *—PTI*

Indian marksman Fahd Sultan ***PHOTO: FACEBOOK***

New Zealand team arrives in Islamabad ahead of T20I series

ISLAMABAD, 14 APRIL

New Zealand men's cricket team arrived in Islamabad on Sunday ahead of their five-match T20I series against Pakistan which will kick off on April 18.

Pakistan Cricket took to X, to announce the arrival of the New Zealand team, "Welcome to Pakistan, @BLACKCAPS! The New Zealand team has arrived in Islamabad ahead of the Bank Alfalah Presents Jazz Pakistan Vs New Zealand T20I Series 2024."

Ahead of the T20 World Cup, The Kiwis and the Men in Green will look to fine-tune their squad and assess the players who could feature in the 15-player squad for the marquee event.

With the majority of players involved in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024, New Zealand have named experienced all-rounder Michael Bracewell as the skipper of the tour. Pakistan will be led by Babar Azam who was recently reinstated as the skipper of the white ball format in place of Shaheen Afridi.

New Zealand will face Pakistan in a five-match T20I series ***PHOTO:/@THEREALPCB***

Star pacer Mohammad Amir and all-rounder Imad Wasim who reversed their retirements have made sensational comebacks in cricket after being named in Pakistan's squad.

For the five-match series, former fast bowler Azhar Mahmood has been named as the head coach. Meanwhile, Wahab Riaz has been named senior team manager, with Mohammad Yousuf as batting coach. Saeed Ajmal, who was the bowling coach on the last tours of Aaustralia and New Zealand, will continue as the spin bowling coach.

Pakistan would be looking to take revenge for their 4-1 T20I series defeat away from home against the Blackcaps earlier this year. *—ANI*

Palak bags 20th Paris quota for India in shooting

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Reigning Asian Games champion Palak Gulia bagged the 20th Paris Olympic quota place in shooting for the country, clinching the bronze medal in the women's 10m air pistol event at the ISSF Final Olympic Qualification Championship (Rifle and Pistol) in Rio De Janeiro on Sunday. The 18-year-old from Jhajjar, Haryana, who had won an individual gold and team silver in the 10m air pistol at the Hangzhou Asian Games, overcame a slow start in the 24-shot final, displaying nerves of steel to climb steadily up the leaderboard and eventually end up scoring 217.6. India has now clinched a maximum of 16 Paris Olympic spots available to a country in pistol and rifle events.

The country's shotgun shooters can still earn four Paris berths in men's and women's trap and skeet events when the ISSF Final Olympic Qualification Championship (Shotgun) commences in Doha on 19 April. *—PTI*

UFC 300

Pereira knocks out Hill to retain title

WASHIGNTON, 14 APRIL

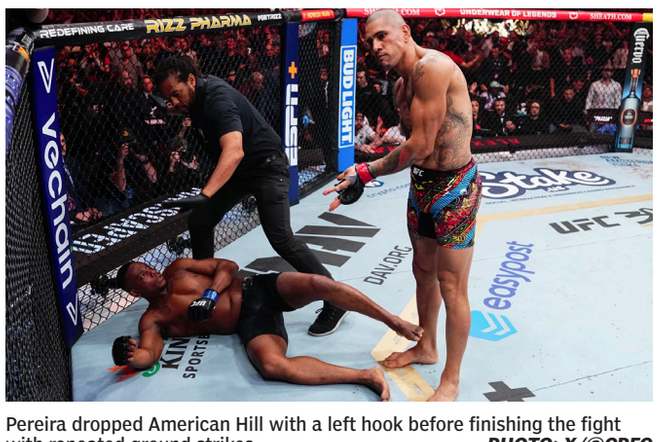
Alex Pereira knocked out Jamahal Hill in the first round to retain his light-heavyweight title at the landmark UFC 300 event in Las Vegas.

Brazil's Pereira, 36, dropped American Hill, 32, with a left hook before finishing the fight with repeated ground strikes. Pereira has now won seven of his eight UFC bouts in a remarkable two and a half years.

"When I step into the octagon I don't see myself as champion. I do the same thing in my personal life.

I don't let this belt go to my head ever," said Pereira. Max Holloway delivered the moment of the night at the T-Mobile Arena as he stopped fellow American Justin Gaethje in the final seconds of the pair's lightweight bout for the symbolic BMF title.

Holloway, 32, pointed to the ground with 10 seconds to go, inviting Gaethje to stand and trade punches, before knocking him out with one second remaining as the pair swung wildly. In the co-main event, Zhang Weili retained her strawweight title by unanimous decision against compatriot Yan Xiaonan in the UFC's first all-Chinese championship bout.



Pereira dropped American Hill with a left hook before finishing the fight with repeated ground strikes ***PHOTO: X/@CPFC***

Pereira wows again

The landmark 300 event boasted a strong card top to bottom, with 12 current or former champions in action, including two in the first fight of the night in former flyweight champion Deiveson Figueiredo, who beat former title holder Cody Garbrandt by submission in the second round. The UFC's efforts in producing a star-studded show are synonymous with past centenary events, with WWE star Brock Lesnar fighting at both, while McGregor and Jon Jones were in contention to appear at UFC 200 before their bouts were cancelled.

But former middleweight champion Pereira was granted the prestigious headlining slot against Hill and he once again made the most of his opportunity in the spotlight. *—BBC News*

Mallorca probing racism case against Tchouameni

MADRID, 14 APRIL

Spanish club Mallorca said Sunday it was working with authorities to identify the fan who made monkey gestures after Real Madrid midfielder Aurélien Tchouaméni scored a goal in a Spanish league match this weekend.

The young fan was seen on television appearing to make the monkey gestures as Madrid players celebrated Tchouaméni's goal early in the second half at Son Moix Stadium on Saturday. The fan then threw a plastic water bottle onto the field and Madrid players quickly showed it to the referee.

The Spanish league was also expected to formally denounce the alleged racial abuse.

Mallorca said it "will not tolerate any manifestation of racism" and noted that it "actively participates in all campaigns to eradicate this scourge that goes beyond sport." In its statement, it said it didn't want the "isolated case" to tarnish the image of Mallorca fans.

Aurélien Tchouaméni ***PHOTO: REAL MADRID CF***

No one has stood trial in Spain in a case of racial abuse in professional soccer. Madrid won Saturday's match 1-0 thanks to Tchouaméni's second-half goal. It leads the league by eight points over defending champion Barcelona. Mallorca sits in 15th place six points from the relegation zone. *—AP*